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## The Countess Pharamond.

(A SEQUEL TO "SHEBA.")

By "RITA,"

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### CHAPTER VI.

#### POLICY AND POPULARITY.

PAUL lingered on at Heidelberg through all the weeks of spring, and in Paris the Countess Pharamond was enjoying the sweets of popularity and success. She saw as little of her husband as was possible, but he took good care to inform himself of her every movement and occupation. He had too little faith in women to trust one of them. His wife, however, gave him no cause for any special jealousy. The admiration she allowed was merely a general admiration, and in no single case had degenerated into anything approaching intimacy. In truth she disliked Frenchmen and Frenchwomen. They were superficial and insincere; the men were invariably sensualists and voluptuaries, the women frivolous and immoral.

Not that the translation of Bessie Saxton into the Countess Pharamond meant that the girl's nature had also undergone a change. She was in every way fitted for fashionable life, and delighted in its endless excitements and enjoyments. But there came times when her associates wearied and disgusted her, when her gowns and jewels seemed of small account, when the voice of flattery rang hollow as false coinage, and vice looked ugly and coarse under the gilded shame, or specious pleas that strove to hide it from the world, or dignify it by the name of a *grande passion*.

She thought women were too solicitous to please, and men too indifferent. She often felt bored, though she dared not show it, even to her husband. Nothing is really so wearisome as a perpetual round of pleasure, though no one who has not tried it will believe the fact. The Countess Pharamond had a hundred "dear friends." Strange to say the one whom she liked best, and found the most useful and amusing, was the Duchesse de Valette. They saw each other almost daily; called each other by their Christian names; discussed toilettes before ordering them, and consulted each other on every little fashionable difficulty or dilemma that was rude enough to obtrude itself even under the gilded roofs of *le monde*.

There was no rivalry between them. The *belle* Hélène had her own *côterie* of admirers, and was still queen of her own special set. It was a very fast set, but it was very amusing, and managed to get a good deal out of life.

The women smoked and flirted, and had adventures more or less *risqué*, and ran into debt to their tailors and milliners, and were at every race-course and every ball that was fashionable. They were *au fait* with every infamy, and delighted in the most impudent personalities respecting their dearest friends. They chattered and gossiped, and laughed and sneered, and believed in nothing, and cared for very little, save the success of a new gown or the sensation of a new scandal.

The Countess Pharamond was decidedly "out of it" among them, though by no means over-scrupulous or prudish in her ideas. But, fortunately for herself, her tastes were not vicious, her nature decidedly cold, and she had a wholesome fear of her husband.

She made up her mind that she was not going to risk what she had won for the sake of any sentimental folly, and the men she met in society were utterly incapable of inspiring her with even a passing interest.

They all seemed vicious and effeminate beside the only specimen of manhood that had ever found favour in her eyes, or aroused her interest.

Brief as was her acquaintance with Paul Meredith, little as she had known of him, yet the physical attraction he had held for her had never been superseded. When she saw him again in her own *salons*, that attraction was in no way lessened by the fact that he held honours and possessions far exceeding her own.

All other men had seemed dwarfed into insignificance in his presence. Even had he passed from her memory he was destined to be perpetually recalled, for her friend Hélène was constantly sounding his praises and lamenting his departure. "He was so handsome, so distinguished;" had an air of such charming melancholy, "a physique so manly, a manner so courteous." So would the duchesse run on with her vivacious and by no means reticent eulogies, and almost unconsciously Bessie found herself comparing him with other men, certainly not to his disadvantage.

Meanwhile, the season went on, and Pharamond had no reason to be dissatisfied with his wife's social success, or to find fault with her behaviour. Indeed, she steered her way through the somewhat difficult waters of Parisian society with a skill he could not help admiring; triumphing, with a bright and willing acceptance of her triumphs, and offending no rival, even while accepting universal homage.

She was popular without effort, and was wise enough to be always more considerate to women than to men. From the latter she had nothing to fear; from the former, a great deal to gain.

The keenest policy could not have served her better than did her own instincts, and in making a friend of Hélène de Valette, she put the finishing touch to her popularity, and even won the reluctant admiration of her husband.

With the end of the season the countess—rather timidly—ventured her request as to that visit to England, but Pharamond roughly refused to go there.

The truth was, he was a little anxious to get rid of his wife for a time. He had been invited to make one of a very fast and wild bachelors' party at a *château* in Hungary, owned by a certain Magyar prince chiefly notable for his vices and extravagances. No ladies were to be invited. Sport of the roughest, and gambling of the most reckless description, was the programme. It suited Pharamond, who had a certain amount of recklessness, savagery, and love of adventure not usually characteristic of his nation.

In this dilemma he betook himself to Madame de Valette for counsel and assistance. He knew his wife would not remain at their own *château* with only her child and mother-in-law for company, during the hot summer months.

The duchesse was in her boudoir and alone. Even Pharamond's keen eye could not but admire the skill with which art had defied the ravages of time both in her appearance and surroundings.

He murmured some complimentary phrases as he seated himself by her side, and she accepted them with due recognition of an insincerity that once had been almost too ardently sincere.

"On my life, *Hélène*," he said, "you grow younger every year. Who would think you were a day older than Bessie?"

She laughed, and took a scented cigarette from her silver case.

"Your wife is built on grand lines. She will look no older at forty than she does to-day," she said. "And, now, to what do I owe this honour?"

She shot an inquiring, somewhat mischievous glance at him, as she leaned back on a pile of cushions and sent the tiny rings of smoke up to the shell-tinted ceiling.

"I want to consult you," he said frankly, "about—about my wife."

She raised her eyebrows. "Surely she is not giving you any trouble yet?" she said demurely—"much as you deserve it."

He laughed grimly. "No, I have no fear of that. The truth is, *ma chère*, I want to go away for a month or two, and I cannot very well take her where I am going. Could you not suggest a visit to Spa, or Kissingen, or Ischl to her? and would you very much mind going with her? I know women are always the better for a visit to *Bads* and springs."

The duchesse looked at him with unfeigned amusement. "Why do you not suggest it yourself? She is singularly obedient."

"But she cannot go alone, and she would certainly not go with any one she did not like. Now, you are such close friends——"

"Oh, *mon ami*, I do not need so much explanation," interrupted the duchesse. "I had intended to go to Trouville; but, on the whole, I do not see why Spa or Ischl should not be as amusing. They are certainly far more healthy. I have always heard the waters are good for the complexion. And I suppose there is decent society. Strange, I have never been there before."

"To say you are going, is to attract society after you," said Pharamond gallantly. "The Duchesse de Valette has always



her own court and courtiers. If you decide to go, I will join you later on my way from Hungary."

"I wonder what his object really is," thought the duchesse, regarding him speculatively under her lowered lids. "He has one, I know. There is no earthly reason why Bessie should not go by herself, or with his mother. Why does he ask me?"

She wondered whether it would amuse her to go to wild forests and mountain heights, to martyrize herself at a *Trinkhalle*, and live among *châlets* and woods.

It would be a novelty and a rest. She was candid enough to acknowledge that she did need *that*—occasionally.

Fatigue was possible, and physical weariness not altogether unknown, even amidst the thousand distractions and amusements of society.

"You are going to Hungary?" she said presently. "Ah! I have heard of that party. Our sex is to be rigorously excluded. My dear Maxime, what will you do?"

He laughed. "Is not a fast the best preparation for a feast?" he said. "I shall console myself with the hope of seeing you afterwards."

She shook her head with its myriad little golden curls. "We have passed the stage of flattery and compliments, *mon ami*. Besides—though it may sound droll—I really like your wife."

"I am pleased to hear it," said Pharamond drily; "it is a compliment to my taste and judgment."

"I confess your marriage surprised me," she continued; "but, on the whole, I am inclined to think you are very fortunate. She is not cold, but she is undoubtedly honest. The combination is unusual, I allow. But you neglect her very much. Do not be too sure it will be always safe to do so."

His brow darkened. "I have no fear," he said. "She knows me, and she understands my conduct is to be no rule for hers. For the rest, *Hélène*, I trust you. After all, you were my friend before you were hers."

"Does that mean I am to play the spy to please you? Thank you, *mon ami*; it is not a *rôle* I appreciate."

"You know very well what I mean, *Hélène*; I am not in love with her and never was—I cared more for your little finger in the days of old than for all the beauty she possesses. But all the same she is my wife, and I do not choose her to be——"

"As you have found the wives of other men? Is not that it? It is curious how marriage brings out all the selfishness of a man's character. I think your wife has a great deal to learn, Maxime; but do not fear that I shall teach her the art of—compensation."

"A woman does not need much teaching," he said gloomily; "her nature is apt enough."

The duchesse laughed merrily. "I believe," she said, "you are jealous, though you pretend indifference. That is foolish, and makes one uncomfortable. Nowadays a husband does not avenge—he only ignores. Not that you will have cause to do either. Your wife is not of the type. As I said before, you are singularly fortunate. Only—sometimes one finds sinners more amusing than saints."

"No doubt," he said. "But then one does not go to one's wife for—amusement."

He rose and laid his hand caressingly on her shoulder. "You will go with her to Austria?" he asked with a little doubt.

She glanced up. "But certainly, if you wish, my friend. All the same it is a strange whim—and will she like it? She was so anxious to go to England."

"That," he said grimly, "is the very reason I choose her to go to Austria."

The Duchesse de Valette lay back on her pile of cushions for long after he had left, reflecting and wondering over those last words.

They had meant—something. Of that she was quite sure. Why should Pharamond object to that visit to England which his wife had looked upon as settled? And why was he so anxious that she should accompany the countess? "He has some motive, I am sure of that," she said to herself as she glanced with satisfaction at her own reflection. "And I shall find it out—in time. I have found out everything else about him. It will be strange if I fail now."

## CHAPTER VII.

### IN SEARCH OF DISTRACTION.

THE Countess Pharamond heard of the projected scheme from her friend Hélène and acceded to it at once.

The fact of being free for even one month from her husband's

presence and association was of itself enough to reconcile her to any project, however disagreeable. But this was not disagreeable. She liked travelling and novelty, and was on sufficiently intimate terms with Madame de Valette to accept her as a companion in preference to any other of her many Parisian acquaintances. She was always lively, amusing and good-natured. Indeed Hélène de Valette was one of those fortunately-dispositioned women who are always on good terms with themselves and to whom life seems a perpetual comedy. She had never—in her own opinion—done anything very wrong, and to possess such an opinion is one of the secrets of personal comfort. Now and then she had been guilty of a weakness, a folly, perhaps an imprudence; but these were, after all, the fault of circumstances, and even very wise people acknowledged you could not control circumstances, however much you might wish to do so.

So in due time she and the Countess Pharamond arrived at pretty, quiet, pine-wooded Ischl, having secured rooms at the "Kaiserina," and dispatched many *fourgons* in advance, and attended by couriers and maids and other necessary appendages of fashionable travellers.

They had not hurried over the journey, but taken it in leisurely fashion, staying here and there as fancy decided. Indeed, the countess had been so charmed with Salzburg that she had been with difficulty persuaded to leave it.

When dinner was over, however, on the evening of their arrival, and she and Madame de Valette were sitting in the balcony of their room, watching the moon rise slowly over the heights of pine and the dusky waters of the Traun, and the shadowy groups under the trees of the esplanade, she acknowledged she was glad they had come here.

Ischl was not very full, it being yet early in the season. That, however, according to Madame de Valette, was rather an advantage, as it would give them opportunity to attend to their health and test the recuperative powers of baths and springs before facing the gay crowds who would assemble later on.

Meanwhile their rooms were delightful; the *cuisine* seemed excellent; the weather was warm and settled, according to their host and courier; they had dined comfortably, and were only conscious now of that pleasant sense of fatigue which makes rest and moonlight enjoyable.

The duchesse reclined on a very low lounging chair amidst a pile of cushions. She had on a loose tea-gown of cinnamon-coloured silk and black lace, a cigarette was between her lips, a black lace scarf framed in her curls of golden hair and her delicately-tinted face. She looked thirty instead of fifty in the dim soft light, and Bessie watched her with quite admiring wonder.

"How will you exist here, *Hélène*, without your usual string of admirers?" she asked presently.

The duchesse withdrew her cigarette for a moment and laughed softly.

"There will be others, *ma chère*," she said. "There always are. Believe me, it is a woman's own fault if she does not find amusement. Besides, I fancy that some of our Paris friends will follow us soon."

The countess rose and leant over the balcony, gazing down at the passing figures below. The moon had risen, and a flood of brilliant light poured itself over the rippling water where the ferry boats passed from side to side, or a barge lay moored against the banks. The hum of voices and laughter came to them with soft distinctness. The air was heavy with the scent of the pine woods.

Two figures were passing under the balcony. The countess, idly watching, saw only the old bent form of one man leaning on the stalwart protecting strength of another. They stopped at the entrance of the hotel. A rose, fastened in the bosom of her travelling dress and loosened by her leaning attitude, fell suddenly down, struck the hat of the younger man and rolled to his feet. He looked up. He could not distinguish her features, but she saw his distinctly in the brilliant moonlight. A sudden exclamation escaped her. She drew back, and the warm colour flushed her temples.

"What is it?" asked her friend curiously. She had heard the exclamation and she noted the sudden warmth and excitement of the countess's face.

"It is very singular—of all people—that he should be here," murmured Bessie.

"He—who?" asked the duchesse languidly.

"My English friend—the Earl of Amersley," she answered. "I think he must be staying at this hotel. He came in with some old man."

"Amersley—Amersley," murmured Madame de Valette. "Ah, I remember. The handsome Englishman who was at your first reception. The gods are kind, *ma chère*. He is worth cultivating."

"I wish I were quite sure," said Bessie. "Do you think we might ask for the visitors' book?"

"But certainly. Ring for Karl, and he will obtain it for us."

But when the courier was dispatched on that errand, and Bessie eagerly turned over the leaves of the book, she saw no such name as Lord Amersley.

At last her eyes fell on two signatures bracketed together, and she pointed them out to her friend.

"Look there," she said. "How odd he is. He has only written—'Paul Meredith, England;' and here is his friend—'Professor Franz Müller, Heidelberg.' He has dropped his title. I wonder why?"

"Perhaps he found it too expensive," said the duchesse tranquilly. "All Englishmen are eccentric—and mean."

"I am sure *he* is not," said Bessie with indignation. "I expect it is a whim. He wanted to be quiet, and foreigners make such a fuss over an English title. That was the name I knew him by in Australia."

"We will send and tell him we are here," said the duchesse with awakened interest. "Give Karl your card, and write on it our rooms, and a request to come up. There is no use in being conventional when one is travelling in a foreign country."

Bessie obeyed with alacrity. She was certainly not inclined to quarrel with fate for this piece of good-fortune. There was no other man of all her many acquaintances and admirers that she would have cared to see even had she had the choice. But Paul—ah! that was very different.

She had been obliged to conceal her disappointment and chagrin when Pharamond refused to take her to England, and now here, in this quiet, tranquil nook of lake and mountain, was the very person for whom she had experienced that disappointment.

Would he be pleased? Would he accept that abrupt invitation? It was something entirely novel for her to experience such restlessness and uncertainty as she did experience while awaiting that answer. But at last it came.

The duchesse watched her narrowly as she read those pencilled

lines. She saw the flush, the smile, the sudden change from anxiety to pleasure.

"He is coming," she said briefly.

The countess folded up the note. She did not offer it for her friend's perusal. "He will be here immediately," she said. Then she glanced down at her plain but beautifully-fitting travelling dress.

"I wish," she said, with some dissatisfaction, "that I had changed my gown."

"You look very well. You need not fear," said her friend, with an odd little smile. "You are one of the women, *ma chère* Bessie, who look best in severe and simple toilettes. Fripperies and fantasies do not become you. Has not Pharamond told you so?"

"I do not appreciate his tastes," said Bessie with some asperity.

The duchesse laughed softly and lit another cigarette. "That is a bad compliment to yourself," she said.

At this same instant the door of their *salon* was thrown back, and the attendant announced in mixed phraseology, "Monsieur, the Herr Meredix."

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Paul came through the dimly-lit *salon* and on to the balcony where the two women were sitting. The duchesse greeted him with effusion, Bessie more quietly and cordially.

"I was so surprised to see you," she said; "I imagined you were in England."

"I am not very fond of England," he said. "I spent the early part of the season there; but I was glad to get away from it. I came here really because my old friend Müller was ordered to Ischl for his health. He is wonderfully better already."

"You are very faithful to your friends," said the countess softly. "Was not Professor Müller in Sydney when you were there?"

"Yes. He came to England about a year after I had left the colony. As for being faithful—well, I think friends are too rare in the world to be treated lightly. I have found few enough."

"How do you like Ischl, monsieur?" interposed Hélène de Valette. "We are but just arrived. Are there many people here?"

"I believe so, madame. I am delighted with the place, or



rather its surroundings. I have not much in common with its fashions and gaieties."

His eyes did not rest on hers despite the glance that wooed them. He was watching a boat moving slowly over the ripples of silvered water.

"It is very beautiful," he said, somewhat absently. "But for my own part I prefer the mountains."

The sharp eyes of the Duchesse de Valette were watching him intently.

"She is nothing to him," she reflected. "He scarcely even remembers her presence; but it is different with her. I wonder why he came?"

Indeed, Paul was wondering a little himself. Certainly inclination had very little to do with it, but he had been surprised, and Bessie's note had been somewhat urgent. A refusal might have seemed ungracious, and there really was no reason why he should not come. That was all.

"You and Countess Pharamond are old friends, are you not?" said Madame de Valette presently. "I met you at her reception, you remember. I thought it was very cruel of you to desert Paris so soon."

"Paris would neither miss me nor concern itself about me," said Paul. "I have really no acquaintances there. It was a mere accident that took me to the Countess Pharamond's reception. I think I mentioned to you that I had not even the honour of knowing who was to be my hostess."

"Yes; and I remember also your astonishment when I pointed her out to you. It is not often modern life affords us—situations. Everything is terribly monotonous in the world. Do you not think so, monsieur?"

He had taken a chair between the two women—he was nearer to the duchesse than to Bessie. She had grown strangely embarrassed, and was thankful that her friend seemed inclined to take conversation off her hands.

Madame de Valette could be charmingly gay and witty when she liked, and, though Paul found it somewhat of an effort to respond, he managed to talk to her more freely than he could have done to the Countess Pharamond.

He was keenly conscious of the emotions and memories caused by the latter. He dreaded and yet longed to hear that one name

from her lips. But Bessie was silent, and made no allusion whatever to those years in Australia.

This sudden and unexpected meeting had made her so strangely glad that she could only marvel at her own content. She, who had scoffed and mocked at sentiment all her life, was only conscious now of the sweetness of the pine-scented air, the silvery ripples on the water, the soft gleam of starlight, the deep rich tones of one voice sounding ever and again through the gathering dusk. She could frame no other wish or desire but that the peace and sorcery of that hour might last and linger on, unchanged and undisturbed.

She wished he would look less sad and grave. Was it because he still remembered that one brief passion? Were men really so faithful in their memories and their loves? She had never believed it in her life; she did not *want* to believe it now.

With an effort she roused herself and joined in the conversation. She was strangely quiet and gentle. They spoke of music, art, many things that were quite impersonal and seemed better suited to the scenes and the solitude around than the idle chatter of society. They discussed plans for the morrow, and she was vaguely conscious of a new and dawning interest in the ensuing days and weeks.

At last Paul rose to take leave of them. Nearly an hour had passed. The duchesse smiled softly to herself as she watched his tall figure move through the *salon*. Then she glanced at the absorbed face of her friend.

"*Le diable est entré,*" she thought.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SNARES AND VICTIMS.

A WEEK had passed. It had been full of pleasure, amusement, sunshine. It seemed to the Countess Pharamond at once the happiest and most innocent time she had ever known. She had grown to love the quaint little town, the gleam of the water under the old grey bridge—the wood-clothed hills—the scent of the pines—the dusky, quiet roadways—the far-off glitter of the glaciers—the great snow-crowned heights where the clouds rested, and the summer rains fell like drifting mists.

There were many people always about them, and endless ex-

cursions and amusements planned and carried out; driving parties, boating parties, water picnics—all the diversions that society can invent, and wealth accomplish.

Almost against his will Paul found himself entangled in a perfect network of obligations and engagements. By common consent—or the skill of Hélène de Valette—he was acknowledged as the friend and escort of the Countess Pharamond, and no party where she was present was considered complete unless he was there also.

It may be owing to man's clumsier or less-suspecting nature that he rarely discerns the subtle threads of entanglement which women weave about his life until those threads have grown strong as steel, and intricate as a problem. Then the only remedy is a forcible one—the cutting sharply asunder the Gordian knot that no manly fingers are deft enough, or patient enough, to unweave.

To do that, however, requires a nature more courageous and—to their honour be it said—more brutal, than most men possess. A man will do many things, foolhardy, reckless, desperate, but he does not willingly like to insult a woman, or draw forth her tears and reproaches. Many men drift into intricacies and entanglements from mere carelessness and indifference. They never *intend* to let things go too far—that is to say to become dangerous or unpleasant; but perhaps they reckon without their partner in the game. As no two people love equally, so no two persons can pretend an equal knowledge of each other's nature or intentions.

The game of flirtation as instituted by society is no doubt a very interesting and amusing occupation, but it is well to be very exact in its definition, and very scrupulous in drawing the line between fancy and feeling.

To Paul all women had become so impersonal and so indifferent that he never gave a serious thought to any one of them. The Countess Pharamond was no more to him than Madame de Valette, or any of the pretty, foolish butterflies of the Parisian world who had fluttered here in her wake.

They dressed and laughed, and chirped and chattered, and made pretty notes of colour under the dark pine boughs, or floating over the bright Traun water, or going to and from the *Trinkhalle*, sipping from their monogrammed glasses, and discussing the

seriousness of "complaints" and the results of the *Cur* in the same breath as the latest fashion, or the newest scandal, or the forthcoming amusements of the day.

The Countess Pharamond was as much a butterfly and an idler in Paul's eyes as any of these women. He wished she would not insist so much on his accompanying their pleasure parties, he never found them even amusing, and it seemed to him that mountain solitudes and forest glades and blue lake waters were all somewhat desecrated and coarsened by the introduction of chattering *mondaines* and foolish Parisian *gommeux*, and the cigarette smoke and champagne sparkle of most of these excursions. Society always takes its world with it, just as it takes its toilettes and its luncheon baskets, and the presence of that world makes simplicity and natural enjoyment alike impossible. But had Paul been less absorbed by that great sorrow which for him had darkened all life, and less unsuspecting as regarded the wiles of women and his own attraction for them, he could not have failed to observe the difference in the Countess Pharamond's manner to himself, and to all other men.

Beneath her frivolous exterior, her vanity, and her worldliness there lived the possibility of a great and strong and utterly reckless passion. She herself had not yet recognized the fact. She had always considered herself too cold to care for any man with that utter self-forgetfulness which makes love at once so generous, and so exacting. Vanity and ambition had led to her marriage with Pharamond. That marriage had given her all she had any right to expect, but the sneers, and covert insults, and indifference of her husband were like smarting wounds, at once painful and humiliating. The fact of having to keep them concealed even from the eyes of her dearest friend did not help to heal them. Only in perpetual distraction and excitement could she find even temporary forgetfulness, and this sudden peace, this soft and subtle, and seemingly most innocent friendship, was the only rest her mind had known, or her untroubled nature experienced for many years.

It was happiness only to know as each new day dawned, and her eyes opened to greet it, that some one in whom her own life felt interest, some one whose mere presence meant all the sunshine of the day, would be with her, near her; in sight of glance, and in sense of sound.

She neither sought, nor cared, nor thought of anything else while the days glided into weeks, and the sweet tranquil hours made up for her a sum of perfect content.

The handsome grave-faced Englishman was not popular. He was too melancholy, and too absorbed, and too serious. No one grudged the Countess Pharamond her conquest, or made any attempt to dispute it with her. As for H  l  ne de Valette she watched proceedings with a little amusement, and a great deal of malicious pleasure.

Pharamond had forsworn a lengthy and—she had dreamed it—a life-long allegiance to herself, and she had never forgiven him. He had promised to keep her *au courant* with every phase and incident of his life—and instead of doing so had returned from his travels round the world with another woman as his wife—returned to find her widowed, free, rich, and yet unable to enjoy any of those advantages in just the one way she had determined upon enjoying them.

If she had cared for any one in her heartless, frivolous life, she had cared for Maxime de Pharamond, and she was furious at finding herself supplanted. She soon discovered, however, that it would be perfectly possible to revenge herself for the slight she had suffered, and that her best method of taking such vengeance was to make a friend of her unconscious rival.

Bessie herself was quite ignorant of the manner in which she lent herself to her friend's schemes and projects. H  l  ne in her heart pronounced her stupid ; but she was really not at all stupid—only unsuspecting. The constant praise and subtle flatteries respecting Paul which Madame de Valette whispered daily in her ears, were too pleasant for denial on her part. But no one knew better than herself how cold and indifferent he really was : courteous, gentle, considerate, unselfish, but in vain did she look for warmth of interest, for any special sign of regard, for any word of sentiment, or any look of admiration.

It annoyed her sometimes when she looked specially charming, or was arrayed in the most becoming of toilettes, to receive neither notice nor flattery from just the one voice that would have made either of value. But no man is so absorbed, so indifferent, so blind to the beauty and attractions of all women, as the man who loves and remembers *one*.

Paul was constantly wooed to forgetfulness, but every art and

allurement were wasted on that chill and courteous indifference which made an impassible barrier between the present and the past.

He knew in his inmost heart that never again for him would any woman's love seem worth the winning, any woman's life give peace or joy or forgetfulness to his own. But this he could not tell them, and this they certainly would not have believed.

In this world the deep natures always suffer, where the shallow ones enjoy.

Müller, looking on at the pretty social comedies being played before his eyes in the heart of those green valleys, found himself not a little interested and amused. He saw further than Paul himself, and he read the Countess Pharamond as he would have read an open book.

Long ago he had taken the measurement of her character, and put her down as utterly selfish, and utterly unscrupulous. But he knew that to such a character and such a nature passion is both a dangerous and dominating influence.

When he sauntered by Paul's side in the cool dusky evenings and noticed how invariably she joined them, he began to watch her with special, and by no means flattering attention.

Her words were light and gay, her manner charming as that mingling of English seriousness with French art could make it, but he noticed her face, and words were of little account. The look that would flash into those cold blue eyes of hers spoke more eloquently than ever she imagined. The flush and softness of her face, the constraint of her manner, its rapid changes from coquetry to pleading, from lightness to appeal, from mirth to gravity, were all studied and criticized by the old German.

Instinctively she felt he was not her friend, that between them there was a spirit of antagonism. He appraised her with unflattering accuracy, and he let her know that he did so. He spoke openly of the wiles and follies and vices of women; the rarity of truth and honour and sincerity in their characters. He believed that in almost all women the greatest passion would be subordinate to self-interest, and he did not hesitate to say so.

Paul felt almost vexed sometimes at his blunt and unflattering denunciations, but then Paul was far from recognizing a danger to himself in the open and avowed friendship of the Countess Pharamond. Müller knew that no passion is so cruel as that



passion which only wins indifference, and yet can afford to wait with slow untiring patience for its end, or its revenge. He recognized in the Countess Pharamond possibilities of which she herself was unconscious, but which circumstances would ripen into form and shape, as heat moulds iron. Of all classes of women there was none that he had so much reason to detest as the woman who, with hot and cruel passion, pursues the object of her fancy as the tigress its prey, never relenting or ceasing such pursuit till its object is secured.

To the woman who can wait with patience, it is almost always possible to win the race at last. Perhaps it is fortunate for men that very few possess such patience, especially when their feelings are aroused. When they do he has small chance of escape, especially if to that one virtue they also add the—vice—of being perfectly unscrupulous.

It was not to be wondered at, therefore, if Müller disliked Bessie, being possessed of opinions so unflattering respecting her sex and herself.

In the long excursions they planned and carried out he never joined. He was not by disposition or nature fitted for society, and he bluntly said so.

He loved best the solitude of woods and river ; to lie idly in the soft grass of the meadows, or chat to the ferrymen and bargemen of their lives and duties. The idle gossip and petty babble of the men and women who sauntered under the trees or passed in their chairs to the *Trinkhalle* seemed foolish and senseless to him. He was a little angry sometimes that Paul had suffered himself to be drawn into it, but he could not help acknowledging it would have been impossible to quite avoid it.

Society is a quicksand in which, if you place only one foot, you may find yourself drawn bodily down ere you are aware of your danger, or awaken to the fact that one vigorous struggle might have freed you.

So Müller watched and observed, and said very little.

Paul was no longer his pupil and associate. He was a man with the world at his feet, and to that world he owed certain obligations. Suffering and poverty and sorrow had been his early teachers. It remained to be seen what lessons he would learn from the perils of prosperity, the flattery of a world he might influence or coerce, the homage paid no longer to an

obscure singer who wooed fame, but to the personality of a man who had won fortune, and inherited the birthright and burden of honour and responsibility.

"What will he make of his life?" thought Müller sadly. "Little enough, I often fear. How that one other life would have altered and affected his now: her influence and companionship, her mind and gifts, her love and devotion. Truly Fate is hard, and my old heart grows bitter sometimes as I look at that changed face. My poor Paul!"

*(To be continued.)*

## A Pilgrimage to Lourdes.

THE London season was fast drawing to a close. How tired I was of it, with its dreary round of unprofitable frivolity! I felt that all indeed was vanity and vexation of spirit; man pleased me not. Somehow, I suppose, things had gone wrong with me; I was out of sorts, for everything seemed empty. The "At Homes" bored me to death, meeting the same people time after time; the same empty greetings—having to listen to, and appear to be amused by the same songs, the same old jokes—having to be civil, when I felt inclined to be rude. The butterflies of fashion rubbed me the wrong way—so I determined to fly their haunts. Where could I turn for comfort? Where hide myself awhile and live like a hermit, "far from the madding crowd?"

For many days fruitlessly I racked my brain, trying to think of some secluded spot, where I might be as sad and look as sad as I liked, then suddenly it flashed across my brain—"A Pilgrimage to Lourdes." I had often wondered if prayerful petition to *Notre Dame* would cure maladies of the heart and of the soul—for we have all heard of miraculous physical recoveries—so I determined to put it to the test and go there. Then, acting on impulse, as is my custom, I searched out a few old garments, the reverse of fashionable, neither elegant nor becoming, chiefly of sable hue—the right thing for a pilgrim—threw them pell-mell into my gladstone, donned a long travelling cloak, sent for a hansom and drove off to St. Katherine's Wharf, thinking a sea journey would benefit my health. On arriving, an official marshalled me into the waiting-room, where some of my fellow-passengers to be were collected; they hardly looked promising, I thought, but, I reasoned, appearances are deceptive. Having already a "Cook's ticket" to Bordeaux and the Pyrenees, I went straight on board the "Lapwing," which presently steamed from her moorings and went gaily down the Thames, passing on her way the grand new suspension bridge in course of erection at London Bridge, the noble docks, the Isle of Dogs, Greenwich—

where my eyes fondly lingered, as I thought of the whitebait dinners I had enjoyed there—Rosherville, Gravesend, Tilbury Fort and Sheerness, until we finally found ourselves in the Channel, steering for the North Foreland, which we rounded about nine, when I shortly retired to my bunk, which was too short for me—so narrow, so high—and oh, the stuffy atmosphere! it seemed to suffocate me and banish sleep, so that I was wide awake when, about one o'clock, I guessed from the grating of the vessel that she had grounded, and discovered ere long, from the hurried whispers of the steward and stewardess, that our noble captain had landed us safely on the Goodwin Sands. Fortunately all the lady passengers were asleep save myself, in blissful ignorance of our position and of the fact that if the wind rose and the sea roughened our situation would become very serious; that the vessel might go to pieces, and we poor creatures become food for fishes. One lady I had noticed, of extremely generous proportions, would have satisfied a whale, and even in that anxious moment I could not help wondering what sort of fish would get her, and how he would like his meal. But hark! a distant sound of corks told me of brandies and sodas, and brandies and sodas told me that the masculine element had not retired to their bunks; then I wondered how they'd behave in case of danger, and having to take to the boats, which I knew well is always attended with considerable risk. I did not get out of my bunk, though sorely tempted to do so, but lay trembling, fearing the worst. After awhile, as nothing dreadful happened, and I was very much overwrought and fatigued, somehow I must have fallen asleep, for when I awoke the sun was shining, my sister passengers were all busy over their morning toilet, and everything looked bright. Thanks to a kind Providence and rising tide, we had got off at six a.m., no one the worse, and doubly happy at our escape. If it had not been the one topic of conversation over breakfast, I might have thought it had been a dream.

It was such a lovely morning as we stood on the deck of the vessel, watching the white foam, as it rushed right and left of us, and the million sparkles, as the sunlight glinted on the gently undulating waves! We watched the porpoises rolling about ahead of us, always in couples. I wondered if they were mated and matched all right, and what the marriage laws were in porpoise

land—I thought there was a certain skittishness about one Mrs. Porpoise, but her lord and master kept a good look out.

Never did I have a merrier few days, thanks to Hibernian influence. There was a young Irishman on board who kept us all alive—songs all day and in the evening too, as we sat, some on deck chairs, others at our feet, leaning against the vessel's side as we skimmed along, the phosphorescent sparkles gleaming on the dark waves; then we danced "by the light o' the moon." There was no music, but what did that matter? Some whistled while the others danced, and "others" whistled while the "somes" danced; then some light refreshment and "good night."

On Monday morning our French pilot came on board, as we steamed into the Gironde, to steer us up the river, at the mouth of which we passed the charming watering-place of Royan on the one hand, and the lighthouse of Le Verdon on the other. Further on was Pauillac—an important seaport—the Atlantic steamers do not ascend higher; it is also the chief export station for the Médoc wines. A pleasant day we had, every one looking so happy, and forgetful of the ills of the voyage and the terrors of the Bay of Biscay.

At 7 p.m. we arrived at Bordeaux, one of the chief seaport towns of France, situated on the banks of the Garonne, which is a fine tidal river, but very much charged with mud, having few features of interest. Nothing can be finer than the view of the magnificent quay of Bordeaux, and the broad river, which abreast of the town is about a quarter of a mile in width, crowded with shipping, many of them three-mast vessels, up to the magnificent stone bridge of seventeen arches, the finest in France.

I rested for the night at the Hôtel des Ambassadeurs, thankful to find myself once more on *terra firma*. Among the delicacies furnished for my dinner were royans (the local name for sardine), fresh from the sea, ceps (a mushroom cooked in oil), and mûrines (a tiny bird about the size of a lark). The market also supplies ortolans, caught near Agen and along the foot of the Pyrenees.

The commercial importance of Bordeaux is due to its situation on a fine navigable river. It can boast of handsome buildings of varied architecture, and no city in Europe can display a more splendid water front. The old town of narrow though populous streets is separated from the north or more modern quarter, consisting of wide openings and broad streets. It is somewhat a

sprawling city to get over on foot, but omnibuses and *fiacres* are abundant. There is a fine cathedral of St. André, built by the English; the Palais Galien, ruins of the Howard Palace, the theatre—which is one of the oldest and most celebrated in France, built about the time of Louis XIV.—and the museum, containing some grand pictures, all well worth a visit. Nor must I forget to mention the Central Market, supplied with the choicest fruits, flowers and vegetables—all so temptingly arranged. The market women were picturesquely attired in short black or red petticoats, displaying their neat woollen hose and wooden *sabots*. They wear high white caps stiffly starched, white or coloured kerchiefs pinned across the bosom, and some wore richly-chased gold earrings, probably heirlooms.

But à Lourdes! à Lourdes! After a hearty meal, once more on the road to the terminus, a considerable distance from the town and the one for the Spanish frontier, which is to take me to Pau via Dax, a journey of from five to six hours.

Immediately after leaving the station of St. Jean we entered the monotonous sandy district extending south, covered with fir trees, heather and broom, and known by the name of Les Landes. I noticed that all the fir trees were stripped of the bark, here and there, and small tin cups fixed beneath, into which the resin flows in the liquid state of turpentine from the incision, and when full collected. When the incision begins to heal, a fresh one is made above it, and so on to a great height. The old trees seem thus converted into fluted columns. Beyond Puzoo, the fertility of the plain, the watercourses, the luxuriant festoons of the vines, and the magnificent view of the Pyrenean range, give interest to this portion of the route. The situation of Pau is, perhaps, scarcely surpassed by that of any town in France, its magnificent view over the chain of the West Pyrenees reminding me greatly of that from the terrace at Dinan, and also from the platform at Berne. The range of the Pyrenees presents a strikingly beautiful and varied outline of peaks, cones and ridges, often cut like a saw, rising darkly outlined against the southern horizon.

The most conspicuous and interesting building in the town is the Castle, the birthplace of Henri Quatre. The moat and the ground round the castle are laid out in pleasant walks, and the interior (open to the public every day) is replete with historical interest.



But à Lourdes ! à Lourdes ! The railway from Pau passes through a plain of considerable width nearly covered with maize and flax. Owing to the return of a pilgrimage from Beteram, our transit was not very rapid, and our arrival in consequence considerably delayed. The train was crowded to suffocation with all sorts and conditions of pilgrims, who mostly seemed known to one another. Some got out on the way occasionally to stretch their cramped limbs, others to chat with their friends, or to drink from the streams, the pace at which we were going threatening no danger to these mild diversions.

One picturesque village succeeded another ; there was something more interesting in the varying forms of the mountains which we were gradually approaching, as they loomed in purple grandeur against the clear azure of the evening sky, forming a majestic background to the marble white churches and the houses of Lourdes, where we had at length arrived.

Such confusion, such a crowd, such a babel I have never witnessed or heard before. Imagine several thousand pilgrims, nearly every one loaded with a huge basket, of the ancient market type with flaps, containing provisions for themselves and family for a three days' pilgrimage ! This doubtless provided sustenance for their own bodies—but oh ! my sufferings !

Baskets in my face, baskets in my back, baskets to the right of me, baskets to the left of me, baskets everywhere ! Shall I ever forget that day ? Bruised, dusty, dazed, in an almost helpless condition, I was further assaulted by about a dozen *gamins* of the dirtiest and raggedest type, who abused and fought with each other over my gladstone and rugs, who was to have them, one tearing them one way, one another, utterly regardless of my gesticulations and rage.

I found all the hotels full, the streets a surging mass of humanity, flying pell-mell along in all directions, luggage-laden *fiacres* scattering them mercilessly about. Bells ringing on the horses, the clattering of their hoofs on the small stones, the cracking of whips, the hoarse cry of vendors selling *bougies* and bouquets for the Virgin, which were thrust in my face at every turn, was confusing. One pleasing feature was the delicious smell of vanilla, the pods of which men sold in little bundles, crying "*Vanille, vanille,*" as they went along.

At last, at one hotel the kind proprietor promised me a room

for that night on the fourth *étage* ; I was told I must not dine, so I hastily swallowed a cup of coffee by way of refreshment, to be in time to join the "procession" (it was now seven o'clock), and off I went to the far-famed "Grotto de la Vierge," the rendezvous of the pilgrims who wished to invoke the aid of the Virgin.

I found myself among countless thousands of men and women, all in a state of hopeless confusion, each one carrying a lighted *bougie*. One was placed in my hand, and having been told that I must join my own particular *pèlerinage*, I started to try and find it. Each *pèlerinage* consists of about one thousand persons wearing a cross of distinctive colour and shape ; thus, the members of one *pèlerinage* wear red crosses, those of another green, and so on, and suggests a puzzle, getting them all in their places ; my badge being a red one, I looked about wildly for my comrades ; to find them was no easy task among all the flaming *bougies* and struggling pilgrims ; at last I discovered them, and we got into something like order, and off we marched, chanting the *Ave Maria*.

I was just beginning to enter into the spirit of the thing, when I heard a frizzling noise in the region of the back of my head, accompanied by a strong smell of hair singeing, when I happily discovered, just in time, that an old lady behind me (who had but one eye) had set fire with her candle to my back hair, and to the lace on my hat. Fearing a recurrence of this and a greater conflagration, I withdrew from the procession, and as an on-looker could better appreciate a demonstration at once unique and wonderful. For miles the procession wound itself among the zigzag paths that creep up the face of the mountain, having the appearance of a huge fiery serpent, ever changing and with endless continuity, the deep tones of the men's voices a fitting accompaniment to such a scene. This singing and processioning kept on far into the small hours, the churches being illuminated with numerous rows of lights outside, and service going on all through the night. At last, footsore and weary, I returned to my room on the fourth *étage* and retired to rest, but not, alas ! to sleep—Somnus was shy and wooed me not ; I suppose my brain was over-excited with all the strange sights and sounds I had seen and heard that day, and my resting-place was not of the cleanest or most comfortable. Alphonse Karr has said "that we do not travel for the sake of travelling but for the sake of having

travelled ;" the distinction is a nice one—I began to agree with him.

Up early next morning to explore. Lourdes is beautiful, and with a beauty all its own. Situated in the heart of the Pyrenees, encircled by high peaks and ridges which rise on all sides, while in the foreground the Gave rushes and tumbles along, and meets one at every turn, its banks beautifully fringed with trees. In the distance is the castle, once the key to the valley of Lavedon, commanding the four roads which unite here from Tarbes, Bagnères, Argeley and Pau ; it is now used as a barrack. Froissart gives a long account of its varied fortunes, which render this feudal fortress interesting. After inspecting it I went to see Calvary ; a winding zigzag path leads up a steep slope, on the summit of which is a large cross with a life-size figure of the Saviour on it in marble ; the pure whiteness of this figure is thrown up vividly by the green backgrounds. Beyond the Gave, at a short distance, is the famous "Grotto de la Vierge," which has become a place of pilgrimage since 1858, in consequence of the declaration of a girl, Marie Bernadette Soubirous, that the Virgin had several times appeared to her ; the girl subsequently became ill and was taken care of by the Ursuline nuns of Neaers until 1879, when she died. The spring, which was said to have burst forth out of the rock at the time of the first apparition in 1858, is accounted to have miraculous healing powers.

This story is well shown in a cleverly painted panorama, which represents Lourdes as it was at that time in its primitive state, destitute of houses or churches ; the young girl is depicted in her simple peasant's dress, kneeling in prayer, a lighted *bougie* in her hand, burnt down to the flesh, and yet by some miraculous intervention of Providence her hand was not even scorched. When the apparition of the Virgin appeared to her and said, "*Allez boire à la fontaine et vous y lavez*,"—at these words water gushed from the rock which was bare. The story goes that the girl replied, "I cannot drink ; it is muddy," when it instantly became of a crystal clearness. Eighteen times the apparition of the Virgin appeared to her and said, "Build churches to me, and let the sick and the weary come and pray to me, and walk in single file procession together, and I will intercede for them—to God the Father to heal them," &c.

In a recess of the Grotto there is a life-size figure of the Virgin

in white drapery, the beautiful face uplifted, the hands clasped in prayer. This statue is surrounded by hundreds of crutches and artificial supports, cork legs, surgical boots, irons for the legs, &c., which have been cast off from time to time by the pilgrims, who are said to have regained the use of their limbs and been restored to health. In another recess of the Grotto is a Communion-table with the usual rich appointments, at the back of which, in a huge metal stand, are hundreds of wax candles arranged in tiers, and further back some of the height of an average English-woman. These leviathan candles are all gifts to the Virgin from the pilgrims, and are kept alight day and night. Holy Communion is given at stated hours, when people are allowed to enter the Grotto, which at other times is railed off.

The pilgrims arrive in countless numbers from the beginning of May till the end of October, from all parts of the world; some of the costumes are very quaint, those from Finisterre particularly. The short full black skirts, heavily gathered or gauged at the waist, bright coloured aprons of orange, green and crimson, and the pretty muslin Bretonne caps, varied in shape—some like a baby's old-fashioned cap with embroidered crown, some with stiffly-starched flaps, and others with a coronet, but all entirely covering the hair. Some of them wore, in place of the cap, a gay-coloured handkerchief twisted round the knob of hair worn low on the neck. The types were various—the women *blonde* and *brunette*. I noticed some of the old women had fine faces, like those seen in Dutch pictures, lined and wrinkled, but, nevertheless, most interesting, showing they had struggled bravely through a hard life. Most of them looked prematurely old, and few (even of the young) I found beautiful. Of the diseased and afflicted, alas, how many! from the infant in its cradle to the paralyzed and aged, tottering on the brink of the grave. It was painful enough to see the old suffering, but touching in the extreme to watch the poor little creatures of a few months old, blind or horribly diseased, lying in their cradles quite still, their tiny white faces turned heavenward, in pathetic resignation, the sightless eyes of some seeming to implore the intercession of the Holy Mother. One child particularly attracted my attention, as it was always brought veiled to the shrine. On one occasion I had the temerity to lift the veil, and oh, horror! its poor face was an indistinguishable mass of corruption, each feature seeming to

be merged in the other—leprosy, I suppose ; its constant wallings were of a most heart-rending description.

The helpless are brought from the hospital in wheel chairs, or on stretchers, and placed in front of the Grotto, where every one kneeling supplicates the intercession of the Virgin with God the Father, to heal and bring comfort to the suffering, the sorrowful and the afflicted. Here people congregate day and night, prostrating themselves on the ground. As soon as one set of pilgrims depart, another arrives. The miraculous cures mostly take place on emerging from the baths, or *episcenes* of holy water, which are free, and built in well and neatly-constructed stone buildings near to the Grotto, arranged on one side for men and the other for women. The hours of admission are 8 to 11 a.m. and 3 to 5 p.m. There are hundreds always waiting outside.

The diseased and healthy alike enter one small room to undress. A curtain separates this *cabinet de toilette* from the bath, which is partly filled with holy water that is carried in pipes from the rock whence it flows, and is rarely changed in the day. The floor is of stone, without rugs or carpet. When disrobed, two women attendants put a coarse kind of linen wrap upon me ; each took a hand and conducted me to the bath, into which I descended by steps, while my attendants said a prayer asking the Virgin to have pity upon me, and to grant my prayer, &c. Owing to the efficacy of the water, a minute's immersion is all that is necessary, and contagion has never been known to take place. On emerging (I had happily the first dip), I noticed the wrap I had worn was wrung out for the next bather, and so on, one doing duty, I suppose, for the whole morning, the first comer only having a dry one. Towels were an unknown luxury ; it would seem people were expected to have their pocket-handkerchiefs convenient. I must mention that in the bath-house I saw several English ladies side by side with the " Sisters " attending on the invalids. One charming lady, dressed in widow's weeds, told me she had lived for thirty years in Lourdes, latterly devoting herself to this work.

I regret to say that I had not the satisfaction of seeing a cure *de mes propres yeux*, although I heard on several occasions cries of, "*Un guérison, un guérison !*" and saw a woman borne along among the crowd, being besieged with questions as to her malady and recovery, but I never found it possible to approach her,

owing to the crowd. There I heard more cures of nervous disorders—faith is the one thing needful—but I was told the percentage of those who are cured is small—thirty in a thousand—if even so many. I certainly read through an immense volume of records which is kept in a small building facing the Basilisk Church, under strict medical surveillance, which gives accounts of recoveries from ailments that for years had baffled medical skill.

The churches are very handsome and nicely decorated; one, the Basilisk, has its walls tiled from ceiling to floor with tablets of *reconnaissance*, for both physical and mental support, some very beautiful, and all worded with heartfelt expression of deep love and gratitude to the Virgin.

Lourdes owes its prosperity to this miraculous fountain of water, the gift of the Virgin. Its streets are full of shops and booths for the sale of images, souvenirs, and *objets de pitié*. Hotels, cafés, and lodging-houses abound. The railway is choked with excursion trains and the inns with visitors. Broken wine bottles, chicken bones, and greasy paper strewn about detract much from the charm of this interesting place. The pilgrims lead an *al fresco* life and mostly sleep in the churches, which are open all night. I was cautioned to carry my money in a bag and suspend it round my neck, and *never* to let it out of my sight, the eighth commandment not being much respected there. This applied not to the residents of Lourdes but to some of the "visitors."

One night, feeling very wakeful, perhaps because the moon was shining into my room—round, bright, resplendent—I got up, and hastily dressing made my way down to the Grotto, no uncommon thing to do at Lourdes at midnight. I found many there, all engaged in earnest prayer. My attention was shortly attracted—I was perhaps not such a devout pilgrim as those around me—by a little boy, with a face that Murillo would have loved to paint—an exquisite piece of Nature's handiwork, nothing purer or lovelier had I ever seen. He was in rags, and kneeling, the perfect face upturned in prayer, the broad lovely brow, the dark liquid eyes, the sensitive quivering little mouth! I could not turn my eyes from the charming face; my riveted gaze attracted his, when I beckoned him to me and gave him a handful of sous. He returned to his place and again occupied himself with his devotions. His piety however, I fear, was only



simulated, as later on I saw him turning out his pockets for the benefit of his relations, who appeared to be in good circumstances—so I concluded that they used this beautiful child as a decoy-duck.

The walks and drives are lovely, varied and close at hand. For miles I used to walk through the pine-scented woods, taking my luncheon in a little basket. Lourdes lies low, and is very hot, at least it was when I was there in "sweet September," and I was glad to find shelter from the sun under the feathery trees, and to lie down on the soft cool mosses in the "chequered" shade made by the young green foliage, broken here and there by clumps of dark blue wild flowers and wood sorrel; and in the evening, when the sun had gone down, leaving the sky in a glow of crimson and purple glory, I used to walk along the mountain side, the air feeling so balmy and delicious as it blew past me, acting like a tonic on my jaded nerves. The roads are excellent everywhere, and there is nothing to fear for a woman walking alone. Here you meet the peasant wending his or her way home with the friend and help of the family—a donkey, mostly heavily laden—and the cows being driven to their stalls for the night, or a gentle "Sister" returning from some mission of mercy. All seemed peace and rest. Here and there, shining like a star in the darkly wooded mountain, a light to the Virgin. The days indeed seemed all too short, for my pilgrimage was over, my time was drawing to an end.

I was anxious before leaving to visit Cauterets, one of the chief watering-places of the Pyrenees, and Pierfitte is the best starting point. There is a branch railway from Lourdes to Pierfitte, whence the remainder of the journey must be done by road. Being, however, joined by a party of three, I thought it better to hire a *fiacre* with four horses from Lourdes, and we started at seven a.m. It was a terribly boisterous morning—we could scarcely keep our hats on, but were fortunately provided with plenty of rugs, umbrellas and waterproofs, as in the mountains a storm soon springs up, and often with terrible fury. We were soon in the heart of the mountains, but the valley continues stern and rocky, showing marks in its gashed sides and rock-strewn bottom of the fury of the torrents. This wild and desolate road, however, leads into what has been called the Paradise of Argelès, where the valley expands into a wide basin renowned for its picturesque beauty,

fertility and cultivation, ranking among the finest in the Pyrenees. We passed the conspicuous dismantled tower of Vidalos, which, rising in the midst of the valley, conceals the village behind it. Beyond Argelès we passed the ancient abbey of St. Savin, on the site of a Roman villa endowed by Charlemagne, destroyed and rebuilt 945, long sequestered, but now restored. The view from the Convent garden is beautiful; on the opposite side of the valley of Argelès are the ruins of the Château of Beaucens, one of the finest in the Pyrenees.

We next arrived at Pierfitte, a village whose population seemed to live by begging. The whole way now to Cauterets lies through a narrow gorge, where the cheerful beauty of the lower valley gives place to savage grandeur. A splendid carriage road, which our *cocher* informed us took four years to complete, is carried through it, rising immediately behind Pierfitte, before it penetrates into the defile, in well-contrived zig-zags either elevated on terraces of masonry or cut out of the rock; it is a grand piece of engineering. At a short distance from the mouth of the gorge, the view looking back is peculiarly beautiful, from the contrast of rugged, gloomy wilderness in the foreground with the sunny richness beyond of groves, pastures, and corn-fields. We met the Gave now and again tumbling away, sometimes in a long rapid, which frets its waters into foam. Then there was a slight opening in the valley, and a tall, pointed mountain appears at its extremity clad in firs; at its foot lay Cauterets, concealed from view until the road reached close upon it. It was now eleven o'clock, when we drove to a hotel fully prepared to do justice to our *déjeuner*. It is true we had feasted our eyes with the charming scenery we had passed through, but that would not fortify us for a long day's exploring. The *déjeuner* turned out a failure—the food provided very poor, consisting of thin soup, hard boiled eggs and radishes, and one dish of very tough meat; but we made up with some good wine and biscuits.

Cauterets, though in a spot so remote and elevated (3,058 feet above the sea), with savage mountains encircling it and overhanging its roofs with their peaks and pine forests, has quite a townish air, with an octroi at its entrance, paved streets, fine hotels, and lodging-houses, and in the centre an irregular market-place. There is a casino standing in spacious and charmingly laid-out grounds, very extensive, almost like a park; and close

by are shops, containing all kinds of rich and tempting articles for sale, in china, jewellery, wearing apparel, &c. The mineral springs are sulphurous and boiling hot; they are said to present in their strength, warmth and qualities, an epitome of almost all the sulphurous sources scattered over the Pyrenees. The season was over now, and the "Établissement des Œufs" closed; but I was told that in the season the road is thronged with sour-faced invalids; peasant women in red *capulets* mingle with Paris dandies in white *bérets* and red Bearnese sashes (*à la mode des Bains*), ecclesiastics in broad-brimmed hats, Capuchin monks in the brown woollen costume of their order, and Spaniards of swarthy visage and stately gait, their heads swathed in mottled handkerchiefs, who from six to eight in the morning repair to "La Raillière," the principal spring on the banks of the Gave. During the day we hired a carriage, as we were advised to visit "La Cascade;" it was a magnificent drive, but terrible work for the poor horses, always ascending. The steep precipices on either side are bare, except where seamed with lines of straggling fir trees, alternating with streams of fallen rock; at last we arrived at a small hut, where we alighted and crossed a wooden bridge where we got a fine view of the splendid fall, the whole body of water discharged from the "Lac de Gaube" tumbling from a considerable height. By the time we returned it was nearly seven o'clock, and the hour appointed for our homeward journey to Lourdes. As it was now evening and very chilly, our *cocher* suggested closing the carriage, but this we declined; we cuddled ourselves up in our wraps and in delightful anticipations, thinking of the new impressions we should take of the same route, under a different aspect; we had seen the beautiful panorama by daylight, how much more beautiful would it appear to us now!—the shades of evening were fast falling, the full September moon would soon be rising, casting her soft light around. But one by one we fell fast asleep, the result of the sharp mountain air, the regular movement of the carriage, and the seductive warmth of our wraps; each one ridiculed the other as he or she succumbed to the overpowering sleepiness which overtook us each in turn, our heads all nodding in different directions; once or twice I awoke with a start, and with that sense of guiltiness one generally feels when caught sleeping in the open. I saw my companions nodding, the pale light of the moon making their faces look

quite death-like ; this went on all the way, I awaking only as we stopped on the road to get water for the horses or *bougies* for our carriage lamps.

At last we rattled down the streets of Lourdes, all of us awake by now. Everything must have an end, and so did this day, though it contented me so well. I could have said with Faust, as he once did to the present moment, "Remain, thou art so beautiful." The morrow was my last in Lourdes. I got up feeling quite sad, put my few belongings together, had breakfast, and went to take farewell of the Grotto and its surroundings, wondering should I ever behold them again, and "if so, how so?" Who can tell if the intercession of the pure and holy-minded mother of Christ may be more efficacious than our own direct prayers? May not her gentle spirit be better fitted to approach God than mine? Who can tell? Certainly not we *fin de siècle* folk, who scoff at everything and believe in nothing, and have hardly any right to expect our prayers to be granted or our hopes fulfilled.

"Call not pain's teaching punishment : the fire  
That lights a soul, even while it tortures, blesses ;  
The sorrow that unmakes some old desire,  
And on the same foundation builds a higher,  
Hath more than joy for him who acquiesces."

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### Dr. Banister's Cure.

THE village of Blessingham was a quiet enough place till old Miss Jemmett died and left South Place to her godson, Dr. Robert Banister. It was nine miles from a railway station and a town; it read yesterday's newspapers; it received and despatched its letters but once daily. But it was content; it was unambitious of notice; it was satisfied with itself and its stay-at-home ways; it was willing to bow in all things to the dictates of the Uttershaws at the Manor-house, and Sir James Uttershaw was perfectly happy. He was a great man; he was monarch of all he surveyed; he gave the tone to society; he embodied public opinion; what he said was law, what he did was applauded; the vicarage leant upon him; Vigo House and The Lodge and The Nest and Nutfield and Ivy Cottage all looked towards him; whatever he did was right; he was a little pope. Hitherto, South Place had been as subservient to the Manor-house as the other gentlemen's houses in the neighbourhood; the Jemmetts had always known their place; they had watched to see how the wind blew from the Manor-house; they had followed the Uttershaws humbly, had paid court to them, had meekly taken lower places. But when old Miss Jemmett was carried out of South Place and Dr. Banister walked in, the whole order of things began to change. Apparently, the new inmate of South Place was an addition to the locality, and people rejoiced when they understood that Dr. Banister had quitted London and was come to reside amongst them permanently, and they prophesied that his coming would prove advantageous to them. Old Miss Jemmett had been an invalid for thirty years; she had seen no company; no one had ever been asked to break bread beneath her roof. But Dr. Robert Banister was two-and-thirty, handsome and wealthy, clever and sociable, and though South Place was a house of no great pretensions, it was quite large enough for luncheons and dinners and even little dances. Sir James Uttershaw called upon Dr. Banister and invited him to dinner; the whole village followed his example. Sir James told some one that

he considered Dr. Banister an agreeable man, and that he was glad he had settled at Blessingham. All was harmony.

But this blissful state did not last long. Dr. Banister had retired from London, but he found that he could not withdraw from professional life. Young as he was, his reputation was high, and notwithstanding that Blessingham was half a day's journey from the metropolis, that it was nine miles from a railway station, and that it possessed neither hotels nor restaurants, patients continued to flock around him, and the doctor's consulting room at South Place was daily thronged, as it had been in the days when it was situated in Cavendish Square. Naturally enough, the aspect of the village soon changed. An enterprising builder erected a large and comfortable hotel; rows of lodging-houses followed; a tennis ground was made for the sons and daughters of invalids; a club arose; handsome shops sprang up; a promenade was paved and planted and a band was introduced; a hideous iron church was run up for the accommodation of visitors; a pert young surgeon hoisted a brass plate and was diligent in setting broken bones and curing measles and bronchitis; a proposal was even submitted to Parliament for extending the railway and making a station at Blessingham itself. The place was altogether altered, and in five or six years it was scarcely possible to recognize the village which had been so small and so decorous. No one specially objected, however, except Sir James Uttershaw. True, there was a little grumbling, but on the whole Vigo House and The Lodge and all the rest were pleased. The hotel and the villas and the shops meant life and excitement, and where people congregate money is spent; butter and poultry went up and groceries and draperies went down, to the general satisfaction of the old inhabitants. The vicar got large offertories and was able to put up a new organ, and a grateful patient added two bells to the peal of six; the butcher enlarged his shop and sent his daughters to school at Brighton; the landlord of the "Griffin" built new stables and kept horses and carriages for hire, and ran a daily coach to catch the up and meet the down train. The dull, sleepy place woke up, married its maidens to the sons and brothers of patients, grew rich and fat and jingled money in its pockets, and became so much a part of the outer world that it began to subscribe to Mudie's and to run up to London now and then to see the Academy and go to the Lyceum, and even, under the rose, to



read the Society papers and the *Nineteenth Century Review*. It knew all about the aristocracy and the gossip of the stage and what every one's religious tenets were, and the Prince of Wales' movements, and the *on dits* of the clubs and also the latest cut in sleeves and how to do the hair, and the right length for skirts and the last thing in collars and waistcoats. Thanks to Dr. Banister, it was quite a fashionable resort now, and it was agreed that, although Miss Jemmett had done nothing much for her neighbours during her life, she had performed a magnificent act in leaving her modest house and grounds to the distinguished physician. Why, he had actually made Blessingham famous; every one now knew its name. Was any one ill?—"Why don't you go to Blessingham?" his friends cried. Did a case baffle the family doctor?—"You must go to Blessingham," said he; and when people were asked about their summer plans, one out of six replied, "We are going to Blessingham for So-and-so's sake." So renown and fashion settled upon Blessingham, and Dr. Banister was exceedingly busy and had a great account at his banker's, and made himself a fine reputation, and he cured people as if he had been a magician, and every one was delighted.

Every one was pleased except Sir James Uttershaw, but to him the very name of Banister was gall and wormwood. It is not too much to say that he grew to hate his neighbour, and soon after the doctor's arrival he moved his own study and shut up the large dining-hall, because from the windows of those apartments a distant view could be obtained of the chimneys of South Place. To Sir James, all the so-called improvements were vandalisms; the big hotel and the villas were eyesores; the shops were vulgar nuisances; the promenade was an offence; the band was an impertinence; even the completion of the peal of bells affronted him, for had he not intended at some future period to present those bells himself? He would not make use of any of the innovations; with none of the new shops would he deal; with none of the visitors would he associate. True, he had contrived to keep the new buildings at arm's length by refusing to let or sell any ground for building purposes. But what is an arm's length to gay, active young people? They came chattering into the village; they looked over Sir James' gates; they sketched his trees; they even photographed that end of his house which could be seen from the road; sometimes they dared to petition

to be allowed to see the tapestry and the oriel chamber where the gentle Spenser once slept and the great hall where Charles I. once dined. Thanks to Dr. Banister, Sir James' privacy was molested and his dignity lessened. South Place was small and modern, dating only from the reign of George II., but it was now a place of far more importance than the historic Manor-house, which was Elizabethan and large and handsome, with extensive pleasure-grounds an avenue, and something not unlike a park ; and its master—a mere M.D., a professional man, a young man of respectable parentage, no doubt, but of no illustrious lineage, a man who reckoned his days in the county while the Uttershaws told their centuries—was of far more importance in the public estimation than the lonely denizen of the Manor-house, with his splendid escutcheon, his old title, his connection with the peerage, his long pedigree, and his personal grey hairs and three-score winters. Subscription-lists were taken to South Place first and to the Manor-house second. Cricket matches, flower-shows, school treats, were organized, and the doctor was consulted and not Sir James ; the celebration of Her Majesty's Jubilee was discussed and its method settled before Sir James had realized that the important year had come. Sir James, in fact, was no longer paramount ; he had become of no account ; he was a nonentity ; tacitly, the second fiddle had been forced into his reluctant hands.

It was unfortunate that Lady Uttershaw had died within six months of Dr. Banister's arrival in Blessingham, for Sir James had loved her dearly, and in her bright and sympathetic companionship his petty grievances had been wont to melt away, and when he was deprived of her influence there was nothing to prevent his hugging his annoyances and magnifying them. Before her death, the village had been overrun by strangers and the foundation-stone of the hotel was laid, and when Miss Uttershaw married, a twelvemonth later, the hotel was built and filled, a large draper's establishment had been opened and the promenade was being laid down. Dr. Banister was bidden to the ball before Miss Uttershaw's wedding, but that was the last time that he had set foot in the Manor-house. Sir James only recognized him by the stiffest of bows ; he refused to meet him, and as the doctor knew every one and went everywhere, Sir James sank into utter seclusion. His only son was away with his

regiment; his only daughter lived in a distant county and only paid flying visits to Blessingham. Society thought that Sir James was an inconsolable widower and presently left him alone. The poor man was disregarded, and he sat at home, brooding over his wrongs, nettled by everything which happened or did not happen, till he became seriously ill, and his daughter and her husband insisted on his having advice. He was extraordinarily thin, he weighed comparatively nothing, his hand shook, his appetite failed, he could not sleep, he could not walk, he was nervous and fanciful and in the lowest spirits. His daughter was extremely alarmed and so was the family doctor, who came over from the market town nine miles off to see him.

"Sir James is beyond me," said this good man, honestly. "I should like him to see Dr. Banister, but as he seems to object to that, you must get him up to town, Lady Grandison, and he must consult Sir Polybius Sampson."

So Lady Grandison dragged her father to London, and he went to see the great physician, and the great physician shook his head and prescribed a generous regimen and fresh air and cheerful society, and said, finally, "You flatter me very much, Sir James, by coming to see me. Since you live at Blessingham, I should have expected you to consult Dr. Robert Banister, one of the most distinguished members of my profession."

"He is an eccentric, unprincipled fool," said Sir James, loudly and angrily. "A physician should live in town, and not turn the country into a sick bed."

And he went away in a rage, and said that all doctors were rogues and idiots.

I don't know if Sir Polybius' laudation of Dr. Banister had anything to do with it, but certainly the London physician's advice and his prescriptions did Sir James no good. Indeed, he became worse. He had seemed before to be thin and light to extremity, but he lost more flesh and more weight; his appetite was reduced to a minimum; he dozed fitfully in his arm-chair, but never slept at night at all; he scarcely opened his lips, and when he did speak he was querulous and irritable. His condition was pitiable, and Lady Grandison, in great alarm and anxiety, telegraphed to her brother and desired him to come home immediately.

Six weeks later, Captain Uttershaw and his bride arrived at

the Manor-house, and as Sir Edward and Lady Grandison were there to meet them, the whole family party was assembled. Captain Uttershaw was greatly shocked at the havoc a few years had wrought in his father's appearance, and Lady Grandison wept and reproached herself for having neglected her parent during the early days of her happy married life. Young Mrs. Uttershaw, aghast at his dismal looks and solitary existence, tried to coax her father-in-law to eat, to be cheerful, to come amongst his children; but though he liked her attentions, Sir James got no better, and Sir Edward privately told his brother-in-law's wife that it was impossible the old gentleman should live. Sir James' early demise seemed indeed to be highly probable. Still some years short of seventy, he had the appearance of an octogenarian; his grey hairs had become snow-white; he walked feebly; his back was bent; he seemed incapable of exertion, either mental or bodily; he sat apart in his study; he scolded often, but he smiled never.

"If he would only see Dr. Banister, I believe he might be cured," sighed Lady Grandison. "I have the greatest faith in Dr. Banister. Why, people even come from London to consult him! And if Edward or I were ill, we should go to him without a moment's delay. But papa won't hear of it. Somehow he doesn't like Dr. Banister. I don't know why, for I found him charming during the few months I knew him before my marriage. Poor papa says he has spoilt the place. Certainly he has altered it, but then he alters everything—it is his *raison d'être*; he alters people's constitutions altogether, so they say."

It became a necessity to urge upon Sir James to see Dr. Banister; but Sir James, when the subject was approached by his son, flew into a violent passion, swore astonishingly, talked more in three minutes than he had done in three months, and refused point-blank to see the man. His violence was so great and his voice so loud that Mrs. Uttershaw peeped in, half afraid that something dreadful might be happening.

"Come in, Lily," said Sir James, checking his anger at once. "Come in, my love. Jem and I have fallen out a little. Come and soothe us!"

"Why, what have you been doing, Jem?" asked Mrs. Lily reproachfully. "Daddy's hair is all rumpled up, and his white face is quite red."

Then she smoothed the thin white locks and kissed the heated face, and sat down on the arm of Sir James' chair, with her hand upon his shoulder.

"I was only begging my father to send for Dr. Banister, dear," said Jem.

"And I said I'd be hanged first," said Sir James.

"O daddy, I think if you said that, you were a very naughty daddy," said Mrs. Lily, playfully.

"I would," said Sir James, stoutly. "My love, the man is incalculably odious to me."

"I know, daddy. But he might do you good, he is so clever," pleaded the little daughter-in-law. "O daddy, I do so wish you'd see him, to please me, daddy!"

"My love, there is nothing else—*nothing* else I would refuse you," said Sir James. "But I will never ask that man to set his foot over my threshold."

"I don't believe my father would see Banister if he came of his own accord," said Jem, in a melancholy tone.

"Wouldn't you, daddy?" asked Mrs. Uttershaw. "O daddy if a great consulting physician *came*, surely you'd see him?"

"Yes, my love," said Sir James. "If a great consulting physician came, I would. But this man is a scandalous quack. How could he come? I haven't spoken to the miserable fellow for four years at least."

"He might come on business, daddy."

"Nonsense, my love! I have no business with that man."

"Still, if he *did* come, you'd see him, I suppose? To please me, you'd see him if he were actually in the house, daddy?"

"If the man came into my house, I'd see him, of course," said Sir James. "But he won't come—he knows better, my love, he knows better."

Whereupon, Mrs. Lily smiled a very sweet and significant smile, and she kissed her father-in-law again and said it was a shame of Jem to have teased him so, and offered to read the *Times* to him if he liked. But the next morning, immediately after breakfast, she put on her hat and gloves and tripped away to South Place. It was a quarter to ten when she reached the doctor's front door, and when the servant answered her summons, she gave him her card and said, "Ask Dr. Banister if he will be so very kind as to spare me five minutes before he sees his

patients. I have not come to see him professionally, but on very particular business."

The waiting-room was already full of patients from the hotel and the villas, so the servant showed the lady into the consulting-room and went to fetch his master, who was lounging away his last moments of leisure in his little breakfast-room over the *Saturday Review*.

"Who on earth is Mrs. Uttershaw, and what does she want with me?" said he to himself, surveying the card. "I didn't know there was a Mrs. Uttershaw. And at this hour, too! However——"

He felt no particular cordiality towards the Uttershaws, but he could not refuse to see a lady, so he straightened himself and went off with a sigh.

"A wretched woman whose spoilt children want to trespass on my grounds," he thought. "I remember young Uttershaw at his sister's wedding, and I suppose this tiresome person is his wife. However, I shall be very short with her and get rid of her in two minutes."

Then he opened the door and the wretched woman rose to meet him. The doctor was barely forty, and, though he had never married, he was extremely susceptible to the charms of the other sex, and he felt quite startled at the vision of grace and beauty and youth which stood before him; metaphorically, he fell down at Mrs. Lily's feet instantly.

"Dr. Banister, I ought to apologize for coming to see you at this hour," said the lady, without circumlocution. "I am Sir James Uttershaw's daughter-in-law, and, knowing the proverbial kindness of your profession, I have come to ask you to do me—to do my husband and his sister and all of us—a great favour."

"If I can do anything for you, great or small, I am at your service, Mrs. Uttershaw," said Dr. Banister. "Pray sit down, I am not in the least busy."

"You are very kind," said Mrs. Uttershaw. "But I am sure you are busy and I won't keep you long. Do you know that my father-in-law is very ill?"

"I had heard that he was ailing," said the doctor.

"He is very ill," repeated Mrs. Uttershaw, with emphasis. "He has consulted Sir Polybius Sampson without any good result, and we all want him to consult you. But he cannot leave



the house, and he says nothing shall induce him to ask you to come to him. However, yesterday I extracted a promise from him that if you came, he would see you. Now, Dr. Banister, I know I am asking a very unusual thing, but can you, and will you, help me? Will you come and see my father-in-law this afternoon?"

It is probable that if Mrs. Lily had asked him to see all the monkeys at the Zoo he would have consented; he was fascinated by this pretty creature's simplicity and candour, and by her delicate beauty and her dainty costume; he quite forgot that she was a tiresome person, and he entered into all her plans with zest and understanding, and finally walked with her to the gate which led from his own grounds into Sir James' fields, quite regardless of the fact that the clock had struck ten twenty minutes ago, that his room was crammed with patients, and that he prided himself upon his punctuality. Then he shook her hand warmly and actually stood at the little wicket looking after her as she went along the narrow path, her pretty pink skirts brushing against the tall daisies and the long grass, and the breeze fluttering the lace edge of her parasol and the knot of ribbons in her hat, and he envied the grass and the daisies and the breeze, and thought that Captain Uttershaw was a lucky dog, and wondered if Mrs. Uttershaw had an unmarried sister, and then sighed and called himself a fool and told himself that though twenty was the most charming age in woman, no doubt women of twenty looked upon men of forty as old fogies. Notwithstanding which sad reflections, as soon as he had dismissed his last patient, he rummaged through a file of the *Times*, till he came upon the announcement of Captain Uttershaw's marriage to Lily, younger daughter of General Sir Charles Courteney, K.C.S.I., and on looking for Sir Charles' history in Debrett's "*Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage*," he discovered that Lily's elder sister was named Elinor and that up to a very recent date she had been a spinster. With which information he felt very much comforted, and at four o'clock that afternoon he presented himself at the Manor-house, and was shown into the drawing-room where Lady Grandison and Mrs. Uttershaw were sitting.

"Dr. Banister, I think this is too good of you," said the former. "I tried to dissuade my sister-in-law from calling on you, for I thought you would be offended and say it was against

professional etiquette, but she declared doctors were always kind, and I see she was right. Now, Lily, this is your affair and you must carry it through and take Dr. Banister to the study. Dr. Banister, I fear you may find my father very crotchety," she added, after a long pause, for she did not like to say what would have been the strict truth, "very cross and very surly."

"I shall be very happy to do anything I can," said the doctor. "But don't expect too much, Lady Grandison."

Then Mrs. Uttershaw conducted the visitor to the study, and as she preceded him, the doctor thought that, if possible, she was prettier and more attractive in her afternoon dress, all silk and shining beads, than she had been in the morning in her print gown and rustic hat, and he wondered if Elinor were like her.

Mrs. Uttershaw opened her father-in-law's door gently and looked in.

"Dear daddy, here is Dr. Banister come to see you," she said. "Come in, Dr. Banister, my father-in-law will be pleased to see you."

Then she stood aside, and when the doctor had passed within, she softly closed the door after him and went away.

Sir James was sitting in a large arm-chair near the fire-place, and a small fire was burning, because—though it was June and pleasant weather—Sir James' ill-health made him chilly; he held a large knobbed stick between his knees, and, as Dr. Banister advanced, he looked fiercely at him over his shoulder, not rising to greet him or speaking a word of welcome, but scowling at him beneath his thick eyebrows.

"Sir James, I heard you were ill and I have come, as a neighbour, to offer my services," said Dr. Banister, without preface, thinking that plain-dealing would be the wisest course to take with this ungracious old gentleman. "I know a good deal about illness, as you are aware, and if, as a neighbour, I may be allowed to try to restore you to health, I shall be sincerely glad."

"Sir, you possibly mean well, but let me tell you that I consider your presence here an impertinence," said Sir James, very angry. "I believe, sir, I am right in saying I did not send for you."

"No, Sir James, you did not send for me. However, hearing you were ill, I have come, and I hope you will allow me to remain a few minutes," said Dr. Banister.

"You can remain, sir, as many minutes as you may consider it gentlemanly to remain after you have been distinctly told by the master of this house that your visit is unwelcome and intrusive," said Sir James, grimly. "It is impossible for me, as a gentleman, absolutely to turn you out of my doors."

Then Sir James turned his back upon the doctor, who was still standing, and he thumped the floor violently with his stick as he shifted his position in his arm-chair. It almost seemed as if Dr. Banister must depart. But he remembered Mrs. Uttershaw and he thought of the maiden Elinor and he tried another tack.

"I heard that you had consulted Sir Polybius Sampson," he observed.

"Did that rogue Sampson send you here?" demanded Sir James, without looking round.

"No, Sir James. But in a small place like Blessingham one often hears of one's neighbour's affairs."

"Small place!" snarled Sir James. "How have you the face to call this monstrous, overgrown, unhealthy, filthy, miserable, disgusting, ruined place *small*? I suppose you are aware that you have defiled it till an old inhabitant, like me, can hardly recognize it? Why, I found a wasp's nest, sir, on the very site of your hideous, repulsive, over-crowded hotel, when I was thirteen!"

"That is most interesting," remarked the doctor. "Do you know Hampstead and St. John's Wood? Well, I made hay and gathered dog-roses on the site of Fitz-John's Avenue when I was thirteen! *Tempora mutantur.*"

Sir James snorted loudly, and in a manner which, in any one but a sick man, might have been considered rude and offensive.

"I don't care a hang what you did when you were thirteen, sir, or any other man either," he said, positively.

"True. The question is, what you did when you were thirteen. Did you enjoy fairly robust health, Sir James?"

"I did, sir, I was as strong a boy as you could wish to see."

"And was your early manhood tolerably vigorous, Sir James?"

"Tolerably, sir! I rowed in the 'Varsity eight, sir, and I hunted five times a week, and didn't turn a hair!"

"Well done! I'm afraid, however, you over-did it, or carried it on too late in life. You don't look like riding across country or rowing for a cup now."

"Riding ! Rowing !" ejaculated Sir James. "Confound it, sir, I'm very ill ! I'm as near as possible a dead man ! Riding ! Why, I haven't put my leg across a horse for three years ! I'm a doomed man, sir, and nobody can help me. I don't know what's the matter with me—that fool Sampson told me I had no organic disease, but hang it, sir, when a man's dying by inches, what the devil does it matter whether his disease is organic or not ? I tell you I'm on the verge of the grave. Death has me in his grip, and in a very few months there'll be one less old sinner in this wicked world."

Then the poor old invalid shed a few foolish tears out of his over-wrought soul. But the doctor, who was about as well versed in the ways of the sick as any man in the world, took no notice of them, though he was glad to see them because they helped him to diagnose the case, and also because they showed him that for the moment the hard old heart was softer. So he sat down, uninvited, and said, soothingly, "Not if the faculty can prevent it, Sir James. Come, if you don't mind, I should like to ask you two or three test questions, and then you can tell me anything else about yourself that occurs to you."

The thin end of the wedge was in, and with tact and precision Dr. Banister hammered at it till he obtained all the information he wanted. Naturally, Sir James was somewhat stiff at first, but after a time his *hauteur* yielded to the delight of talking about himself—a delight so dear to the heart of a chronic invalid. For months Sir James had not spoken to any one about himself, and now that he found himself talking to a patient and sympathetic listener, he could not resist the temptation, or deny himself the pleasure of describing his symptoms and dilating upon his sensations. Moreover, in the course of the interview, he was able to give the doctor a great many covert hits, and to say a great many nasty things which applied to him, and this was a relief. It is always so satisfactory to tell the plausible wicked that one sees through him—that, though he may flourish like a green bay-tree, one can distinctly see the canker at his heart.

The doctor listened attentively, and drew the patient out with great skill. Never was a cleverer doctor than Robert Banister ! His genius for eliciting the exact state of people's minds and the causes which had conducted to that state, had made him long ago the king of mental pathologists. The conversation was

prolonged, but at last Dr. Banister was able to read his neighbour's heart like a book, and he saw clearly that he himself was the cause of Sir James' illness. He was the unconscious rival whose presence had occasioned Sir James' jealousy and mortification ; he had unwittingly nourished Sir James' morbid animosity ; his popularity had robbed Sir James of that ease of mind which promotes health. He saw the whole thing as clearly as he saw the sun in the heavens, and his sagacious intellect instantly showed him the cure. There was but one. Drugs, he was aware, were of no avail in this case ; nor were bed and diet and the cold pack ; nor were travel and agreeable society and amusement ; nor were the waters of Bath, or Buxton, or Homburg ; nor was galvanism, nor the Turkish bath, nor even massage. There was but one mode of treatment for this case, and the doctor sighed involuntarily, for he was but human.

"There is nothing more to say," said Sir James, at last. "I have made a clean breast of it, sir, and I foresee that you cannot help me."

"I can certainly help you, Sir James," said Dr. Banister, cheerfully. "True," he added, seriously, "yours is a somewhat unique case ; nevertheless, I believe I can put you to rights, if you will agree to follow my directions implicitly. I am not going to diet you or dose you ; I am only going to order you to act. To begin with, you must get up this minute and fall upon me with your stick and thrash me well."

For a moment Sir James looked at his interlocutor in speechless surprise. Then he laughed sardonically.

"You are a fool, sir," he said. And after he had made this direct thrust he felt better—almost as if he could enjoy his dinner.

"You must thrash me well," repeated the doctor, quietly. "After that I shall leave you for six weeks, during which period I shall require you to write me a letter every day, in which you must vilify and abuse me as if I had done you an enormous injury and you had a bitter grudge against me. I shall expect you to employ all your powers of vituperation against me. I shall not be contented if you don't use the strongest language. I shall not be satisfied if you don't empty the vials of your wrath upon my head. Sometimes I shall answer the letters and attempt to exculpate myself, but I shall expect you to annihilate

my arguments and to rebut my defence. You must bring all your powers of sarcasm and invective to bear upon me; you must stoutly maintain that I have outraged you; you must demonstrate that I am the greatest villain unhung. At the expiration of the six weeks I shall call again and request you to thrash me soundly once more. After that I trust you will find yourself another man."

"You are a fool, sir, and your cure is the cure of a quack!" said Sir James, vehemently.

"Nevertheless, Sir James, it *is* my cure, and I must beg you to carry it out," said Dr. Banister. "With your permission, I will take a book for a few minutes while you consider the subject. But pray recollect that you are *very* ill—very ill, indeed—and that the remedy I have pointed out is the sole remedy which will be useful in your case."

Then Dr. Banister selected a volume from the book-shelves and took it to the window, standing with his back to his patient, apparently absorbed in reading.

Left to himself, Sir James reviewed the situation and said over and over again in his mind that the man was a fool, and that it was preposterous and unseemly to expect any one to carry out a treatment which involved the use of the stick. Nevertheless, his soul yearned to thrash the fellow; it had been yearning to thrash him for years, and now that he was positively invited—nay, absolutely commanded—to satisfy his inclinations, his fingers itched to do it. His heart beat quicker at the thought; the blood seemed to course through his veins in a livelier manner and he already felt stronger. He glanced at the figure in the window. Dr. Banister was tall and well proportioned; he was, besides, scarcely more than a young man. But Sir James felt that he was equal to the occasion, and what joy it would be to punish his enemy well! Even if he struggled, Sir James, who had been weak and nerveless for many months, felt that he could grapple with him successfully, and it would be untold delight to pay him off for all old scores and to cut him up without mercy. Sir James was not a cruel man; he had never whipped his children, he had been a tender husband, he was kind to animals. But this was his foe, and he felt that he could beat him with pleasure, and if he could make him wince and writhe and cry out, it would be glorious—glorious!



Then the doctor closed his book and came back to Sir James' side.

"Well, Sir James, have you made up your mind to it?" he said, pleasantly.

"It would be a most improper proceeding, sir," said Sir James, frowning.

"But since it is your only means of regaining health and vigour, I quite hope you will be persuaded to resort to it," said Dr. Banister. "You want exercise—you want stimulus—you want tone. Pray begin."

The doctor gravely removed his coat and waistcoat. He stood prepared. Sir James' fingers tingled to be at him, but the conventionalities of society are very strong.

"It is utter nonsense," he said, testily. "You forget, apparently, that I am a gentleman."

"Not at all," returned Dr. Banister. "But you are a sick gentleman, and I venture to consider you my patient. Come, Sir James, I am not accustomed to have the validity of my prescriptions disputed, and I must beg you to lay about with that stick of yours without more ado. But let me tell you that the efficacy of the medicine lies in the quantity and the quality of the blows given. Beat me as hard as you can and don't stop till you are tired. It will do you no good unless you inflict a sound thrashing. Now—I am ready."

"You fool!" cried Sir James.

But, strange to relate, he raised his arm and began to thrash the doctor. Afterwards he wondered how he had brought himself to do it, but something in the commanding aspect of Dr. Banister, in the resolution of his eye and the imperativeness of his voice, compelled his obedience, and no doubt his own ardent longing to undo the man who had undone him assisted. At all events, he thrashed the poor doctor soundly and with every blow his zest and vigour increased. Dr. Banister bore this tremendous castigation like a man; certainly, he had never been so belaboured in his life, and as the thundering blows rained upon him he suffered acutely and felt a perfect tempest of sympathy for inky little schoolboys and costermongers' Neddies and drunken blackguards' wives; but he thought of Mrs. Uttershaw and the unmarried Elinor, and—though his breath came quick and fast and the unwonted perspiration stood upon his brow—he never

flinched or begged for mercy or attempted to run away or seize the stick in his strong hands.

At last, however, Sir James was tired. His arms ached ; his brain reeled with the intensity of his satisfaction ; moreover, there were blood-stains on the doctor's white shirt. It had been a sanguinary affair, and Sir James felt fatigued, but infinitely better. He sank into his chair.

"Don't say you didn't ask for it, sir," he said, triumphantly, wiping his brow.

The doctor did not speak ; he was putting on his coat and his face was very white. He was, indeed, quite faint, and when he turned round to address his patient, he found that his voice had gone, and in another moment he discovered that his consciousness was going also. So he lay down on the sofa and closed his eyes, and for a moment the world went away from him and he knew nothing. But he was robust, and he recovered quickly and looked up. Sir James was standing beside him, looking anxiously down upon his victim.

"Was it too much for you, sir ? I said it was an indecent proceeding," said he, in a quiet gentle tone.

"I think you will quite regain your strength," said Dr. Banister, smiling. "I believe my treatment will ultimately cure you. Remember to write to me daily, and—though I have never done you any harm in my life—be sure you write to me as if I had robbed you of your dearest treasure and insulted you grossly. Otherwise, do what you like ; eat as much as you can, converse with your family, play cards, enjoy music, read novels, go out walking or driving the moment you feel inclined. I shall see you again in six weeks, and probably you will demolish me entirely with your stout stick and your strong right arm. Good-bye."

"Won't you have a glass of wine ?" said Sir James.

Dr. Banister declined this delicate attention, and Sir James actually shook hands with the fellow, and also walked across the room and opened the door for him. Then he went back to his seat, and although as a gentleman he was sorry and ashamed that he had thrashed another gentleman in his own house, he could not forbear chuckling over the pleasing fact that he had chastised an enemy and nearly annihilated him.

"Upon my soul, I thought I'd done for him," the old gentleman said to himself many times.

But since he hadn't quite done for him, he was glad that, as the saying goes, he had thrashed him within an inch of his life. Somehow, however, Sir James did not see fit to tell his children exactly what treatment the doctor had prescribed.

"We had a long talk," said he, vaguely. "The man is an idiot, as I have always maintained, and I only saw him to please Lily; he wishes me to write him an account of my feelings every day for six weeks."

"And did he order you no medicine, daddy?" asked Mrs. Uttershaw.

"Well, my love, he then and there made me go through a very curious kind of gymnastics—ha—ha!" said Sir James, with grim humour. "It's to be repeated in six weeks, and then he declares I shall be convalescent. It's a funny recipe, my love, isn't it?"

Then Sir James laughed again, and as nobody had heard him laugh for two or three years, they all felt sure that he was better; also he ate his dinner with quite an appetite, and told Jem and Sir Edward stories of his feats at Oxford, and after dinner he played cribbage with Mrs. Lily and beat her.

"That's like Dr. Banister's gymnastics, my love," he remarked.

This was enigmatical and nobody understood it, but certainly Sir James was better and they were all very thankful, and the next day Mrs. Uttershaw wrote the sweetest little note to Dr. Banister, expressing the gratitude of the whole family and their admiration of the doctor's skill, which had made Sir James a different man already.

This note was delivered to the poor doctor as he lay in bed, ill and feverish, too stiff to sit up and in too much pain to see his disappointed patients, who were all sent away and who returned to the hotel wretched and terribly afraid that the doctor was going to die suddenly and leave them in the lurch. The doctor, however, being, as I have said before, of a robust constitution, and being besides in the prime of life, being cheered also by Mrs. Uttershaw's pretty grateful note, got well, and no one but his confidential servant knew of his wounds and bruises, and even he did not know how they had been acquired, being merely told by his master that they were the result of a tough interview with a patient whose mind was slightly unhinged. In a couple of days the patients were re-admitted to the presence-

chamber, and Dr. Banister was once more able to shrug his shoulders and lean back in his chair, without confessing by all his attitudes and his every movement that he had recently been severely knocked about. Then he met Lady Grandison and Mrs. Uttershaw out of doors and received their thanks verbally, and was able to persuade them to come and partake of strawberries and cream in his garden, though he refused their cordial invitations to the Manor-house, saying that he could not come thither till six weeks had expired. However, an *entente cordiale* was established between the two houses which had been so long at enmity, and the doctor pursued his new acquaintance with ardour, and thought a great deal of the unknown Elinor.

Meantime, Sir James' letters flowed to South Place daily. The invalid spent nearly the whole of every morning writing them, and came to luncheon quite hungry with the exertion. As for the letters they were on foolscap, and were the longest epistolary compilations that can be imagined. Sir James, who was no fool, stated his grievances clearly and at great length, describing Blessingham as it had once been, contrasting its former with its present condition, and abusing the doctor for having introduced innovations, for making the village an unfit habitation for Christians, for contaminating it with shops and hotels and crowds of sick Londoners, for, in fact, rendering himself a public nuisance. Sir James was so engrossed with his daily work that he hardly realized to whom his letters were addressed, and he vituperated his correspondent without stint and did not attempt to conceal his own transparent egoism. Every second or third day Dr. Banister sent a succinct reply to the black and fearful charges brought against him, and after a time the tone of Sir James' letters became greatly modified. In the first week, he called Dr. Banister a conceited upstart, a designing rogue, a thorough-paced humbug and an insane fool, without apology; in the second week, he compared him to several sad, bad historical characters, but wound up by saying he doubted not his opponent had meant well, though his pigheaded blindness naturally prevented him seeing things in their right light; in the third, he contented himself with vaguely declaring that people who wished to be regarded as Christian gentlemen should not do obnoxious things; in the fourth, he was satisfied to generalize upon the extreme unpleasantness of the whole medical profession; in the

fifth, he excepted Dr. Banister, and paid him some compliments, informing him that he had gained flesh and his family was of opinion that in point of appetite and cheerfulness he was like his old self; in the sixth, he wrote amicably and thankfully, saying that a burden seemed to have fallen off him and that it appeared to him now as if his old grievances had been more or less imaginary; and finally, on the last day, he penned quite an affectionate letter to his dear Dr. Banister, expressing his great indebtedness to the physician for having cured him of a painful depression of spirits and a physical inability to eat, sleep, or be amused; not being a doctor, he added, it was impossible for him to conceive how the cure had been effected without drugs or applications of any kind, but he supposed that Dr. Banister had exercised some occult influence over him, for certainly he had begun to feel better from the moment Dr. Banister entered his study; his gratitude accordingly was unmeasured—how to express it—how to testify it—he did not know, but he hoped that he and the doctor should be good friends for the future, and in this hope, with very kind regards, in which all his family joined, he remained most sincerely Dr. Banister's, James Uttershaw.

Dr. Banister perused this effusion, smiling; then he took up his hat and sallied forth to the Manor-house, with a light heart. When he was shown into Sir James' presence, the old gentleman sprang up to meet him and came forward, his hand outstretched, a beaming smile upon his countenance. He was quite another creature; he was almost a young man again.

"Dr. Banister, I don't know how to thank you," he cried.

"You have rewarded me by getting well," said the doctor. "But you haven't fulfilled the whole treatment, Sir James; you forget that you are going to give me another sound thrashing to-day."

"That I will never do, so don't ask it," said Sir James, putting his hands behind his back: "I have been ashamed of myself ever since I did it. Nevertheless, I am bound to confess I began to feel better from that moment."

"In my theory of therapeutics, Sir James," said the doctor, "hypertrophied cerebration should be satiated rather than starved; morbid brain-action is quicker restored to its normal conditions by the exhaustion consequent upon satiety than by the irritation produced by perpetual arrestment. Hence my treatment."

Sir James was quite dumb-founded by this flow of long words.

"You are very clever," he said.

Dr. Banister bowed.

"Shall we go through it again?" he asked.

"Never! I would sooner die," said Sir James, fervently.

"My dear Dr. Banister, can you ever forgive me?"

"My dear Sir James, didn't I make you do it?"

"Yes—but I oughtn't to have acceded. I was a brute and a cad—I was a blackguard—an infernal blackguard—and you don't know how I have blushed—yes, at sixty-six *blushed*—to think of it. I made you faint, Dr. Banister—I drew your blood. I must have hurt you badly."

"Well, your arm was stronger than I expected," said the doctor, laughing. "But since you have recovered your health, I am satisfied, and if we are to be neighbourly neighbours henceforth——"

"Neighbours!" interrupted Sir James. "From henceforth, Dr. Banister, let us be the best of friends! If you don't come and dine with me to-night, I shall quarrel with you on quite a different score."

So Dr. Banister came to dinner, with a flower in his coat because he was going to meet Mrs. Lily, and when he entered the drawing-room there sat Lady Grandison and Mrs. Uttershaw and a lovely young lady, who seemed to be Mrs. Uttershaw's double, only, if possible, to be sweeter and daintier and prettier even than she.

"Dr. Banister, let me introduce you to my sister," said Mrs. Uttershaw.

So the doctor's dream was fulfilled, for here was the maiden Elinor, and she was as perfect as his wild and lover-like imagination had supposed her to be. But we will not pry further into his proceedings. It is sufficient to say, that not only has he become Sir James' close friend, but that he is no longer a bachelor, and that he calls Mrs. Uttershaw "Lily," and signs himself, when he writes to her,—*Your very affec. brother.*

FAYR MADOC.



## Geraghty's Garden.

By ELLA MACMAHÓN,

Author of "HEATHCOTE," etc., etc.

EVERY man, woman and child in the town of Aughrim knew Geraghty's garden; and every man, woman and child knew Geraghty himself equally well. For Geraghty was the sexton of the parish church (that is the Protestant church) of Aughrim, and Geraghty kept a dairy, and Geraghty owned a market garden. And this market garden, wherein grew potatoes and cabbages innumerable, with vegetables of higher degree in precisely inverse ratio, according to the unwritten law which regulates market gardens in Ireland, this garden was Geraghty's most cherished possession, for Geraghty held it in the supremely gratifying consciousness that by so doing he kept it out of the hands of his dearest foe, one Christopher Clinch, farmer, churchwarden, select vestryman of the parish of Aughrim, who longed with an exceeding great longing to annex unto the ninety acres of his own good grazing land the little half-acre which formed Geraghty's garden. More than once had Christopher Clinch, by fair means and by foul, tried to wrest from Geraghty his coveted garden; but never Naboth held his vineyard closer than did Geraghty his garden; never would Geraghty hear the voice of the charmer, charm Christopher Clinch ever so wisely. No; the garden was Geraghty's garden, and Geraghty's garden it had for five-and-thirty years remained. Therefore because of this garden, for all those five-and-thirty years had Cornelius Geraghty and Christopher Clinch preserved towards each other an attitude, which has been in the history of nations, not inaptly described, as "an armed neutrality."

Thus, as our novelists invariably declare, "time rolled on."

The inhabitants of Aughrim, not unlike the inhabitants of other places too, derived a considerable amount of gratification from closely following the tacit warfare between two of their greatest men. For, if Christopher Clinch, farmer, churchwarden, select vestryman—Christopher Clinch, who lived in the big slated

house at Rath, who was popularly believed to have "stacks o' money" in the National Bank—was (with the exception of the Clerk of the Crown) the greatest man in Aughrim, there was a decided concensus of opinion in favour of Geraghty running him very close for the position. Geraghty was sexton, Geraghty was the rector's right hand man, Geraghty was on intimate terms with such personages as the Bishop of the diocese and the High Sheriff of the county, while as to the Clerk of the Crown, and the district inspector of the "Royal Irish Constabulary," Geraghty hob-nobbed with such small fry with the ease and *aplomb* only to be attained by one who has spent long years in the performance of exalted and responsible duties. The halo of a refined position indeed shed around Geraghty an ennobling effulgence.

Nevertheless Geraghty had his enemies. And the enemies of greatness are, so the wise among mankind assure us, more in number than its friends. Thus, because Geraghty had a red nose, there were not found wanting those who could say, that Geraghty's red nose and Mullally's public house (the little one round the furthest corner from the church, with the inscription over the entrance door—"P. Mullally, licensed for the sale of tobacco and spirits, to be consumed on the premises")—there were not found wanting evil tongues to say that Mullally's public house and Geraghty's red nose stood to one another in the close relationship of cause and effect.

And evil tongues could say this, despite even the testimony of no less a person than Geraghty's own mother. Now Geraghty's own mother laid the existence of Geraghty's red nose wholly and solely on Geraghty's own liver.

"For," said Geraghty's own mother, with a sadly proud inclination of her venerable head, "that child Cornaylius (Geraghty was fifty-nine) never from the day of his birth had any liver to spake of. Ah! never. It was just a make-shift, Cornaylius's liver, and nothin' more. If any other man was left like Cornaylius with a make-shift for a liver, it's not a red nose he'd have, it's no nose at all, ne'er a nose at all. When I look at Cornaylius's nose, and think of his liver, I'm struck dumb at wondering how he just has a nose at all. But Cornaylius is that sort of man, that what'd daunt five hundred keeps him higher and better than ever."

Thus spoke Geraghty's mother on the subject of Geraghty's nose. And surely if Geraghty's mother were not an authority on that point, to whom would it be possible to apply for more reliable information ?

Some months ere this, however, Geraghty's mother had passed into that "Silent Land," as the poet has called it, and in which, if the poet's appellation be indeed the true one, the mother of Geraghty must find herself (like Othello) with "her occupation gone," for the mother of Geraghty was a mighty talker. Departed this life, at all events, had Geraghty's mother, at an advanced age, estimated indeed at various figures, from ninety-five to one hundred and three, and Geraghty was left alone, for wife and child Geraghty had none. His departed mother had in truth looked with an eye of little favour upon such appendages of human life.

"Cornaylius," she had said, "has no call to be making a fool of himself. Cornaylius isn't the boy for such things. A wife and childer 'd just wear him to skin and bone. Cornaylius has his bizness to attind to, and never wants one next or nigh him, only his poor ould mother. And, what's more, there isn't a girl in Ireland could manage Cornaylius but meself."

Thus with grace and delicacy did "Cornaylius's" mother warn off all trespassers. But, lack-a-day, the mother of Geraghty had been called upon to pay the debt of all flesh, and owing that debt to a creditor who has never yet been known to wait the pleasure or convenience of any human debtor, the mother of Geraghty had, so to speak, to pay up promptly, and to leave Geraghty alone and defenceless in a world of wicked women.

Geraghty's mother died and was buried. And then, ay, ere the grass was green on her grave, Geraghty fulfilled the worst foreboding of his mother's prophetic soul, for—Geraghty fell in love. Geraghty, aged fifty-nine—Geraghty, parish sexton—Geraghty, the proprietor of the Aughrim-Select-Fresh-Milk-Dairy—Geraghty, the owner of the Aughrim-Market-Garden—Geraghty loved! And she whom Geraghty loved was none other than the daughter of Geraghty's life-long enemy, Christopher Clinch. Yes, like those immortal lovers, who lived and loved and lost, in sweet Verona, long, long ago, Geraghty loved his enemy's daughter, and his enemy's daughter loved him—at least, so she told him.

She whom Geraghty loved was only some thirty odd years his junior. He had assisted, in his official capacity, at her christening; he had, for more than seventeen years, on each succeeding Sunday morning opened for her the door of her father's pew (the third row back from the top, left hand side, facing the pulpit), he had sat in his seat beneath the pulpit and gazed at her with contemplative mien, all through all the sermons of all those Sundays; gazed at her to declare, later on, that:—

"She was something to look at. Something like a girl. None o' yer little dwarfs. None o' yer scraggy scare-crows. But, tall as the door and made in proportion, there was a figure of a girl. Fit to frighten the Queen, so she was. Aisy, illigant, wid a style fit for the highest in the land. Too good to be that ould naygur's daughter, but just the girl to be Mrs. Geraghty."

Thus was the fall of Geraghty.

But Geraghty was a great man, and Geraghty wooed not in vain. Despite his red nose, despite his lowly stature ("For I am not," Geraghty would say, "what ye'd call a *tall* man"), despite the trifling difference in their respective ages, the lady of his love smiled upon him. She was a young lady of buxom proportions, albeit she was still in the twenties; her eyes were black and sparkling, her cheeks were round and brightly tinted, her manners were exceedingly vivacious. And she loved Geraghty.

When his mother had been six months dead, and on the day after her tombstone (a monument of gigantic proportions and surpassing melancholy, the awe and cynosure of every eye in the parish), was erected and complete, Geraghty put his fate to the touch. He spoke, and he spoke persuasively, he spoke ardently, he spoke with passion and fervent admiration.

"I am," he said in conclusion, "a man o' me word. I am thirty years in the Church, I live rint free, the house wants paper and paint it's true, but I'll see to that if ye'll only say the word. I'm not a young fella; faith, I'd rather see a girl dead and buried, *dead and buried* fifty times over, than see a girl marry a young fella. For what's young fellas? Impident brats, good-for-nothing blagguards, stuck-up ignoramuses, stiff-necked sinners, Godless blasphemers—that's what young fellas are. What do the like o' them know of trating a wife? *Nothing*. Beat her, starve her, drink all before them (tho' that same isn't much, for where'd they get a penny o' money?), that's the fate of a young fella's wife.

But look at me, look at a man o' my time o' life. Thirty years in the Church, respected and beloved; a man o' sinse; a man o' money; a man o' position; able to make a *lady* of his wife. Able to give her her own dairy, her own house (kitchen, parlour, two bedrooms, scullery, pantry, fowl-yard, green-house, and all illigantly furnished). Able to give her a handsome jaunting car, with the finest little jennet in the land to draw it. Able to give her the best pitata garden in the town. *I'm* the man for a decent girl. Sober, honest, quiet, gentle—gentle as a lamb—no temper, no drink, all agreeable to everything she'd say or do; the pleasantest creature in life to live with. I don't want to flatter myself, for I hate a man that ud blow himself off, but just, me dear, before ye refuse me, just take a look at me mother's tombstone. *That'll* show you the sort o' man that wants to marry you. Is there a man in the land that could equal that tombstone, that could pay that respect to his mother but meself? Look at it; cost twenty pound, oh, not a word o' lie. I'll show ye the bill, and then look at me. And I'd do the same again for every one belongin' to me, I would so. There's no end, *no end* to me generosity if I'm fond of a person. Tell me where ye'd see the like o' that tombstone, and if ye can find its equal ye may call me a haythen."

Enough; she was his, his for all time, subject only to the approval and permission of her paternal relative. This last clause was the one bitter drop in Geraghty's cup of bliss. For was not that paternal relative Geraghty's life-long foe, and must he not abase himself before his enemy to beg the hand of her whom he loved? But Geraghty was a great man, and Geraghty feared no foe.

Up to Rath went Geraghty, armed with the embassies of peace. Into the presence of his enemy he went with undaunted front. Before that enemy he laid his heart bare.

The enemy listened with exceeding quietness; and when Geraghty had said it all (and a good hour or more it took to say it), Christopher Clinch laid down his terms. Geraghty might have his, Clinch's, daughter if in return he, Clinch, might have his, Geraghty's, garden. That was the paternal condition, and from that, nor peace, nor war, nor imprecation, nor persuasion would move Christopher Clinch.

"The girl or the garden," quoth Christopher Clinch, "take

her or leave her, but you can't have both ; and you'll get her no other way."

And then Geraghty arose in his wrath, and swore loud and long, deep and strong, in words not to be repeated, out of respect to Geraghty's ecclesiastical office and Geraghty's wounded heart, that neither would he give up the garden nor the girl. Both did he love, both would he have. Then, growing cooler, he offered to settle the garden, for ever and ever, in every proper legal phrase and by every proper legal method, on Clinch's daughter, the day that daughter should become his, Geraghty's, wife. As well might he offer to settle the Crown of England on that daughter's black hair. Clinch would have the girl or the garden ; and Geraghty went home cursing and swearing and gnashing his teeth, while his lady-love remained immured at Rath, weeping and wailing and refusing to be comforted.

The war raged. Geraghty's garden was Geraghty's garden still, and Clinch's daughter was Clinch's daughter still. Sunday after Sunday Geraghty, with nose redder than ever, and his lady-love, with eyelids which matched the tint of Geraghty's nasal organ most wondrously well, gazed at one another across a vista of pews all through the sermon. But one day there went forth at Rath a paternal edict, which forbade Geraghty's lady-love to go to church any more.

It was a mean revenge—it was a spiteful thought ; it goaded Geraghty to madness.

\* \* \* \* \*

There went out through the streets of Aughrim the report that Geraghty lay sick.

He was not in the dairy, he was not in the garden, he was not in the church ; he lay in his own bed, sick ; ere long rumour cried aloud, sick unto death.

The doctor shook his head ; the rector shook *his* head ; Judy Grogan, the parish nurse, the gentle angel, who ministered to the sick poor of Aughrim, shook *her* head. Geraghty was a dying man. Asked the cause, the doctor spoke of Russian influenza, and hinted at a chill. Judy Grogan snapped her fingers (metaphorically speaking, of course) in the man of medicine's face and said :

"Rooshian Grandmothers! *she* knew what aile'ded him.



Bad treatment and a broken heart that's what was killing him."

And it looked as if Judy Grogan were right, and the man of science wrong.

For days, Geraghty lay silent, speaking to none, caring for none, eating nothing, drinking nothing. Like Hezekiah of old, he turned his face to the wall, and seemed to wait for death. Doctor and clergyman visited him daily; the former said he grew weaker, the latter said—nothing at all. On the ninth day, Geraghty opened his eyes on the doctor, and asked to speak with him alone. At the end of ten minutes the doctor came forth from Geraghty's room and immediately sent for the rector. The rector remained alone with Geraghty for nearly an hour. They spoke together long and low, so low that Judy Grogan with her ear to the keyhole could not catch a single word. And then the rector, like the doctor, came forth from Geraghty's room, and the rector's long lean figure, in its long lean black coat, was seen on the road to Rath. Excitement could no further go in Aughrim than when the rector returned from Rath with Christopher Clinch.

Up to Geraghty's bedside the rector brought Geraghty's life-long foe. There lay Geraghty prone and silent. Very changed was Geraghty, so changed that Christopher Clinch could scarce recognize his ancient foe. All the colour had fled from Geraghty's nose, all the light from Geraghty's eyes; his cheeks were sunken and livid, his hands were yellow and emaciated. If ever mortal man bore upon his body the sad impress of mortality, Geraghty was that man. Christopher Clinch knew now that his enemy was as good as a dead man; and even in his new-born forgiveness and compunction, for Geraghty, in scarcely audible accents, pleaded for the putting away of all malice and ill-feeling, even in that solemn moment the thought flashed unbidden into Christopher Clinch's mind, as thoughts will flash even in such moments as these, of how very soon Geraghty's garden would be Geraghty's garden no longer. He looked past the prostrate Geraghty out through the window to where Geraghty's cabbages were just coming over ground, and, with his eye on the cabbages, Christopher Clinch granted Geraghty's last request, and vowed that he would bring Geraghty's lady-love to see Geraghty once more. With closed eyes and pallid lips, Geraghty lay back in bed.

"I can die happy now," he murmured, "your Reverence hears that; I can die happy."

\*     \*     \*     \*     \*

At eleven o'clock the next morning the inside car from Rath brought Geraghty's lady-love to Geraghty's hall door. Christopher Clinch led his daughter into the presence of Geraghty, beside whose bed stood the rector. There was a fair in Aughrim that day and Christopher Clinch was all impatience to get to the fair. Away to the fair went Christopher Clinch, leaving his daughter behind him. The rector seemed to wish to detain him, but Geraghty, with the caprice of a sick man, would have him begone. The rector smiled a little absently, but the rector's best faculties being engrossed in the task of making two hundred a year do the work of five, it is not wonderful that he should be at times a little absent and self-absorbed. So away to the fair went Christopher Clinch; and back again in two hours came Christopher Clinch and the inside car to the door of Geraghty's dwelling. At the door the rector, still smiling, met him.

"Hush!" he said, raising his hand, "he is sleeping quietly; he has borne it better than we could have hoped."

"Borne it," repeated Christopher Clinch, "borne what?"

The rector smiled a little more broadly.

"His marriage with your daughter," he replied gently, as one who would recall Christopher Clinch's attention.

The eyeballs of Christopher Clinch started from their sockets, the jaw of Christopher Clinch fell beneath his collar, the chest of Christopher Clinch heaved with a mighty passion. With a bound he passed the smiling rector, with a bound he reached Geraghty's bedside.

"LIAR," he roared, "*liar*, ruffian, cheat, DEVIL. Come home," he cried, turning to his daughter, "come home, I tell ye."

But his daughter wouldn't go home. His daughter had not the smallest intention (so she said) of leaving her beloved Geraghty.

Geraghty opened his eyes and groaned, once, twice, thrice—groaned heavily and breathlessly.

"Take him away," he gasped feebly, "he's killing me."

Forth they thrust Christopher Clinch, shouting and blasphem—

ing, into the street. He went to the lawyer, he went to all the lawyers in Dublin for that matter; but it was no use; all the lawyers in Great Britain and Ireland couldn't unmarry his daughter now. Geraghty's lawful wife was she—married by her own parish clergyman, by special licence, in the presence of two competent witnesses—and Geraghty's lawful wife she would remain as long as Geraghty lived. And Geraghty lived and thrived; Geraghty arose like a giant refreshed with sleep. His eyes grew bright, and his nose grew red, and his tongue grew loud once more; and Christopher Clinch sat in his house up at Rath and saw Geraghty strong and well, and saw—oh, sad and bitter sight—saw Geraghty and Geraghty's own wife walking together in Geraghty's own garden.

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## A Day at Versailles.

By ETHEL F. HEDDLE.

APRIL was at its loveliest when we went from Paris for a day at Versailles. We had had stormy inclement weather, with bitterly cold winds and drenching rain; but sunshine had come at last, and we said as we passed the trees in the Luxembourg Gardens on our way to the station, "We shall find the trees nearly out at Versailles," and we were not disappointed.

The town seemed positively to swarm with soldiers—they were everywhere, under the trees on the long straight road, in the restaurants, by the station—small men with their odd, wide red trousers and, what seemed to us, lamentable want of physique and manliness! It was almost noon when we reached Versailles, and we stood hesitating for a moment if we should lunch then or later, deciding to have a comfortable *déjeuner* before we started for the miles of parquet and pictures in the palace. So we left the hazy green alleys and the incessant rataplan, and turned into a quiet street, where we looked out for an unfashionable restaurant. We found it at last, and sat down happily by a bare table, on which presently a dainty little Frenchwoman put knives and forks and glasses. Opposite were four *ouvriers* in their dark blue blouses, eating bread and drinking claret, and presently our own exquisitely cooked meal of "*bif steak*" and, later on, omelette was before us, and was much enjoyed.

Our leader then flourished her Baedeker, and with an "*Allons, mes enfants,*" we left the room. That Baedeker, though carried faithfully through the day, and pored over by its possessor at stolen moments, had been condemned by the third of the trio, whose detestation for guide books, strings of dates and historical details was well known, and with a half sigh *notre tante* submitted, peace being preferable to history, especially on a day of pleasure. And then, after paying our modest one franc twenty-five each, we went down the straight French road, and emerged before the palace. Baedeker sternly prohibited, we strolled through the endless galleries at an easy pace, pausing before any picture that took our fancy, and doing things in a most

unorthodox tourist manner. For Margot had been here before, and said openly she detested historical pictures and portraits, and wanted to get through them and be off to the Trianons, so she sailed along with her fair head in its big hat tossed back, while the dear aunt and I peeped at Baedeker surreptitiously, were caught and scorned, and then, coming upon a portrait of Mary, "*reine d'Ecosse et de France*," stopped short. It seemed so odd somehow to find Scotland's queen here, and to remember how happy she was in the gay court of France, "*la reine blanche*," petted, fêted, admired before her fate took her to gloomy Ecosse and to all the woes and mistakes of her life. We are apt to forget she was France's queen as well as Scotland's!

The pictures were interesting, of course, and taken singly, or say half a dozen per week, might have been fairly grasped. Their multitude now defied anything but the passing glance, and even that grew into a tired stare before we left the slippery polished galleries upstairs and descended. Below were the halls where the German sick and wounded lay, under the enormous canvases in which Napoleon had chronicled his triumphs at Berlin and Vienna. It must have been a curious sense of the irony of Fate which possessed even these stolid Teutons as they lay there and watched the sun streaming in upon the representation of Napoleon's pictured glory. Where was that glory now since *they* were here, and the nation which had been a world's conqueror lay helpless at their feet?

Downstairs, too, is that exquisite statue, the "*Dernier jour de Napoléon*." He is sitting in his chair, looking steadily and yet blankly before him, an old man now, and yet it seemed to me with a world's history written on the strange, inscrutable, impassive, *dying* face. The mingled strength, delicacy, relentlessness and cruelty in the face are quite untranslatable. The delicacy is there, in the fine nostrils and exquisitely moulded lips, a fragment of the same beauty that fascinates you in the Louvre picture, and yet the strength strikes you as if with the chill of a naked sword held to the face. And there is a tragedy in the look beyond expression. The dying king, exiled, humiliated, broken-hearted—abased, and yet never for one moment yielding—seems to sit looking down the ages. Does he see France as she is now?—his own glory dimmed in the long perspective of the years, fading as the gold is fading and

tarnished on the dome of Les Invalides, under which he rests? He who did so much and conquered so much, does he see how Time's revenge will conquer *him*?

We left the statue silently, and wandered out into the grounds. The famous fountains were silent, of course, and the long *façade* of the palace seemed to frown coldly upon us as we walked over the grand walks, and Margot stared into the Sphinx's face, asking all sorts of odd and flippant questions in her own bright irrelevant way. And then, since the Sphinx would tell her nothing, we took a cab to the Trianons, leaving stately Versailles "done" in a perfunctory manner that would have driven Mr. Cook crazy. But oh! the sweetness of that Petit Trianon after the immensity and the cold polished grandeur of the palace! How Marie Antoinette must have loved it! Immensity always chills, however it may be admired, and now we all heaved an instinctive sigh of relief as the little *home* came in view, and we went upstairs. The rooms are mostly as the queen left them. Her bedroom windows were open to the sunny glades, and the bursting trees of the *jardin anglais*, and the fresh sweet air flooded the room. Above the mantelpiece was a pastel of the gentle-faced, sad-eyed Dauphin, with his star hanging over his little breast, and the lace lappets of his coat open. In this bright little home Marie Antoinette and Louis escaped with delight from the ceremonious etiquette of Versailles; here they played at Arcadia and were happy—she with her *laiterie* and her summer houses and her *jardin anglais*. And how they would look back, in the tragic future, to the sunny *petit* home, where life gave them its sweetest moments, and they played at being shepherd and shepherdess with their children. Le Petit Trianon is pathetic beyond all words in its very beauty and rest. We strolled through the grounds, by the rustic bridge and artificial pond, and peeped into the summer house where the king and queen drank their *chocolat*, while the children played on the grass; the paper, with its gay cupids and wreathed roses, was falling off the walls, and flapped dismally in the evening air, and Margot drew us away hurriedly. She said Le Petit Trianon was too sad for words, if one knew any history, which was always a mistake.

However, Le Grand Trianon has more cheerful memories. Madame de Maintenon lived here, and Josephine, and here the



custodian told us Queen Victoria and her husband visited the king, and slept in a gorgeous bed which looked distinctly uncomfortable, for all its grandeur!

Napoleon, too, spent some time here, and had a clock in every room. One is a magnificent bouquet of gold roses, the dial of which is in the heart of one, with the minute dial below. Here the hangings and the furniture are very beautiful, and in very good preservation, and it may be added that, unlike the sepulchral glories of Windsor Castle, they are not hidden by hideous chintzes, which are eyesores, even to uncultured tourists! The April light was growing a little cold as we stepped into the waiting cab and gave the order for the station, and Margot sighed as she leant back.

"Sight-seeing, even with a condemned Baedeker and an obedient party, is tiring! I shall dream I am doomed to walk on parquet with high-heeled shoes all my life, and to learn the victories of Napoleon, with dates, by heart before the morning. What do you say, mother?"

Aunt A. smooths her guide-book regretfully. "I really should have liked to know, Margot, which was the *salle* in which the Emperor of Germany was proclaimed. I am certain that attendant deceived me! If it was the *Salle des Glaces* ——"

"Look it up when you get home, or believe it is the one you wish. What does it matter? It was a delicate question in any case to ask the man."

"I don't think he minded," Aunt A. says placidly. "After all it does not make any difference in *his* life."

"And the French have no patriotism, you think? They don't make as much fuss over it as the Germans. Well, E., and are you asleep? The parquet was too much for you too, eh?"

"No," I answered; but I did not say that my memory had gone back to the eyes of the statue again, and I was puzzling over their expression still. And then, as I thought of that strange king, his glory and his ignominy, his genius and his defeat, his infinite greatness and his infinite littleness, I could only think of one sentence that seemed to express and sum it all up—"The pity of it, the pity of it, Iago!" And so we left Versailles.

## The Revenge of Reuben Royd.

By MARY HAMPDEN.

IN TWO PARTS,

### PART I.

"DOES any one know you are in England?"

"No; I wrote from Melbourne to say I would return, but there are a few technicalities to be gone through, and I shall lie *perdu* until I'm wanted."

"You will not take advantage of your enormous fortune? Not burst upon the London season, glorious in the glamour of your gold?"

"You sarcastic fellow! No; it's rather too soon after my uncle's death, and, though I never saw the old man, I'd like to treat him decently now he's gone. My affairs are in the hands of my lawyers; there are a few legacies, of course, but the executors are abroad and nothing can be done till they return. Why do you speak of gold as though you despised it, Royd? You used not to be like that in the old days."

"Years alter men," my companion answered, as a dull smile passed swiftly across his face. "Gold! What human being will not sell heart and soul for it? What life has ever passed without falling victim to the gold-fever? You tell me," he continued eagerly, "that you are sure of wealth, that you are worth twenty thousand a year?"

"Yes; that is the figure."

"Then you are sure of all the world can give, you are worth all that is counted advantageous. You may command smiles and rule flatterers, obtain social renown, speak and find listeners, cheat, lie, and count on pardon. All this gold can do. Accept the congratulations of a man who spends his life in vainly coveting a fortune such as yours!"

Reuben Royd stretched forth his hand and gripped mine, then threw himself back into the shadow of his elbow chair, his face recovering rapidly from the tension of passion; bending forward

when a mere moment had elapsed, I looked into his eyes in wonder, for no trace remained of the intense feeling which had hissed out his rapid words:

"Gold—gold!"

I shall never forget the singular hatred that breathed in his utterance, nor cease to wonder at the pallor but absolute calm of his countenance when the mental tempest had swept past.

I offered the cigars; and, having thus done my best for him, relapsed into a happy reverie over my own prospects.

Just forty, but feeling years younger, with all the world before me, and an income of twenty thousand per annum to spend in it, what wonder if the future was tinted in roseate hues? And there was another reason why my luck rejoiced me; far away in Australia where I had been spending my impecunious days, little brown-haired, blue-eyed Bertha Westonby was waiting for me to come back to her. She was poor, very poor—but she didn't know I was rich, and we had been as happy building our fancy castles for the future as many engaged paupers have been before us.

My lot was a complete contrast to that of the man I called my friend. Reuben Royd and Arthur Veriton! Our names had been coupled together in our childhood, in school days, and for a time longer, though he was only a tradesman's son and I the nephew of one of England's few moneyed agricultural gentlemen. We had not met for twenty years, since we came of age together, and had heard nothing of each other since. Royd, I knew, was as poor as he had ever been, and I had come home to welcome wealth and luxury. We had chanced upon each other in one of London's crowded streets, and I had persuaded him to come back to my rooms with me that we might enjoy a smoke and a chat over old days; prosperity coming unexpectedly makes the heart tender to those who are still in the sloughs of poverty, and I was casting about in my mind for some idea how to benefit my erstwhile friend.

The pale rigid outline of his harsh features and the web-like wrinkles round his sunken eyes spoke of the work of time; he had gained a hollow in the cheek, a glitter shone in his swift glance; his had been a dark face at best, betraying the scholar's vice—cynicism—breeding distrust by sinister smiles, and still more sinister gravity; now it was darker.

Passing his fingers through his black curls he turned to me suddenly, and I noticed that as he spoke his gaze sought mine. "Truthful yet," I said to myself, "but unscrupulous. What has changed him?"

"Veriton, you are an enviable man" (his voice was soft and melodious); "you will never know the sorrow which has *made* my life."

"*Made* it? Wrecked it, you mean, old fellow."

"For good or evil it is made," he answered, "as an oak blasted by the lightning is made a thing of no value, the promise gone for ever, only the charred shell of wood remaining."

"Oh, you mustn't talk so." I endeavoured to console him with some of the good honest home truths I had learnt partly in my youth, some of them so early that they were taught me by my mother's knee, and which I had trusted in ever since with an ever-growing faith in their wisdom: "A man shouldn't let his life be blasted by sorrow; we human beings are a trifle better than inanimate nature, I hope. Pull yourself together, Royd, and think how much of the great work of the world has been done by hearts that have been well-nigh broken—yes, and nobly done too. I never was one of those philosophers who believed nothing worth doing."

"Shall I tell you my story?"

"I should like to hear it awfully, but don't talk about it if—if it bores you."

He smiled, and replied by commencing his recital as indifferently as a child repeats its lesson; true, the suppressed low voice revealed more than his manner, but neither pause nor gesture declared the tale to be the secret of his life.

"Nineteen years ago, Lord and Lady Loriston and their only daughter, Lady Mabel Loris, took up their residence at Morecombe Hall. You remember the place, Veriton?"

"Perfectly."

"They had one son, a boy whose health broke down at Eton, and the child was brought home to be privately taught. The tutor was a man of low birth, but whose parents had contrived to send him to college, so he was fitted for the task of education. The lessons progressed day after day, and every evening when the paid work was accomplished he studied, for he was ambitious."

"The tutor was?"

"An unworldly dreamer, one so young that he learnt to love—myself. How shall I describe Mabel Loris? Tall and seventeen, she united the wit and frolic of a hoyden with the promise of a queenly womanhood; she accepted the homage of her brother's tutor, enchanted by the romance which varied the monotony of country pleasures; it was charming to have a secret—to reply archly to whispered compliments, to call society 'so terribly prosaic,' to deplore its 'hatred of true love.' Shall I explain to you how they met every morning by the edge of the lake to encourage each other with assurances of their unalterable fidelity? Shall I tell you how his dreams were dreamt? What future greatness he, in his pride, imagined would be his; how he would lay a glorious career before her feet some day, when men would call him noble; he, of low birth? Are all young men enthusiasts? Probably. I will not weary you with this tutor's fancies.

"A day passed when they thus exchanged their vows; a day came when her promise was denied. She had been away to town for her first season, and on her return to Morecombe the tutor told her how the time had fared with him, how he had kept tryst with her in his heart, thinking of her dear face, longing for her return. She answered, with a laugh in which lurked fear, that she could not let him speak of the old folly now, that she had learned her own mind; how foolish they had been! Vows? She would not remember them. 'I was such a child,' she pleaded. 'If you would only forgive me, and think no more about it? You are young, too, Reuben—Mr. Royd—you will so easily forget!'

"Lady Mabel married a moneyed widower before the year was over, and if the tutor thinks of her? Well, no matter; she is free again now, and he is still poor. That is the story of my life."

"A sad story, but not sad enough to make you a cynic. Why, man! Everything changes as it grows; why not a girl's heart? Perhaps she was dazzled by the world's promise, influenced by friends and parents. You have not much right to blame her, seeing how young you both were."

"Blame her," he cried, losing for an instant the stern self-control of his set face. "If ever I can humble her, I will do it. Love!

Yes, it is the fondest love that turns to fiercest hate ; I know the day will come when my revenge shall be fulfilled."

"For heaven's sake don't speak so wildly, Royd ! Mortal man is not a right instrument of vengeance, and when he seeks it he only loses his own soul. I'd rather think that some day you may find a woman sweet and tender-hearted, a home queen, not a society sovereign, like my Bertha—one who will teach you that human creatures should forgive each other's faults, not try to punish them."

"You have found her ?"

"Yes ;" and then I told him of my Australian sweetheart, my blue-eyed, brown-haired betrothed ; and, after the manner of man, was selfishly absorbed in the recital.

I, Arthur Veriton, picturing the future, dwelling on the past, ceased to speculate on the revenge of Reuben Royd.

## PART II.

"WE are in distress ; come to me at once, for I know you will help us.

"BERTHA WESTONBY."

The words of the telegram I had just received rang in my ears with monotonous persistence as I hastened to my friend's lodgings to discuss the matter with him. What could the distress be ? Money losses ? Then, fortunately, I was in a position to relieve it ; at any rate I must obey the summons instantly.

"Royd," I exclaimed, "will you go to my lawyers and explain my absence ? And stay in town ; don't go away until I come back. There is a cheque to pay all expenses." (I thrust into his hand the equivalent of five hundred pounds.) "It will help to set you up in some literary work by which you can make a name."

"I have doubled the money you gave me some weeks ago, when we first met, Veriton ; I shall treble this, and then my ambition will be within my reach."

"Don't lose it. I'm glad you are ambitious."

"I am enough of a fatalist not to fear chance. You will not let any one but your lawyers know where you are, I suppose ?"



"No, I haven't any friends ; I don't know a soul in town."

"Which way are you going?"

"Aberdeen Company, *via* the Cape ; forty-two-days !"

So we parted.

During the voyage I was harassed by anxiety for my little Bertha, but when I reached Melbourne, it was only to find I had been tricked by some one ; she had sent me no telegram, they were in no distress ; the message which had called me away from London had been the work of some hand unknown.

It is needless for me to dwell upon the return journey ; suffice it to say that when I again entered Royd's lodgings it was only to find him gone.

"Veriton, I congratulate you," said an old college chum whom I met by accident in the street, and to whom I introduced myself. "She is a beautiful woman, and you are a lucky man, and no mistake !"

"How did you hear, Lester ? I thought the secret was safe for some time."

"Haven't you seen the *Trumpeter* ?"

He pulled it from his pocket and showed it me, and I scanned the page anxiously only to find the following announcement :—

"A marriage has been arranged between Mr. Veriton, of Vere, nephew of the late Ambrose Veriton, Esq., and Lady Mabel Beauregard, widow of the late Colonel Beauregard, of Silston, Notts."

The paper fell from my hands. Then Reuben Royd had usurped my place, had burst upon society *in the glamour of my gold*, had passed himself off as the fortunate inheritor of my uncle's thousands ! Two months and a half had elapsed since my departure ; in that time he had deluded Lady Mabel into accepting him ; he, the penniless man, whom I had assisted ; this, then, was the revenge which he had planned.

"The affair is being discussed everywhere," said Lester, amazed at my silence. "I've only just come back from Scotland, but I find October absolutely gay in town, and all thanks to you. By-the-bye, you didn't ask me to your ball to-night—but it's not too late yet."

"My ball ? Where ?"

"Why at the family mansion in Grosvenor Square, to be sure. Good heavens! Veriton, what is the matter? Have you gone off your head that you don't know where you've invited your own guests?"

"There has been some mistake; but, old man, whatever you do, don't chatter. Certainly, I should have asked you—quite an old friend—you will come, of course?"

"Yes—happy!—but you won't have time to get home and dress if you don't look sharp. Do you know it's a quarter past eight already?"

I took a hansom and drove to my rooms; then, correctly attired, to my own house, which I had never entered, but of which Royd had taken possession. I was late, but contrived to enter unnoticed with a stream of guests.

"Capital fellow, Veriton!" I heard Lord C. explain to a group of political men on my right, "a strong Tory; he ought to be useful to us when he's married."

"Yes," lisped one of the year's beauties, "and so interesting. I never met any one with a better manner."

There was a crush on the great staircase, and, looking over the sea of heads, I saw the host receiving his friends; his usually pale face was flushed with excitement, his lips wreathed with smiles. I was near enough to hear him murmur:

"*You* do not need to hear me speak a welcome."

A lady was standing with her hand momentarily in his; there was a meaning glance passing among the bystanders.

"Lady Mabel is looking radiant to-night."

"Yes; and what a perfect gown!"

This, then, was the woman to whom he was for the second time engaged. I did not wish to make a scene before all the people, partly for her sake, partly because I would not expose the man whom I had once called "friend;" and I pressed my way back down the stairs, determined to seek a refuge where I might observe events, myself unnoticed. A door on the left of the hall yielding to a push, I found myself in a corridor—then in a less brightly illuminated room—a library, evidently. Luckily my footsteps had been noiseless, for I saw I was not alone. Royd was standing by the fireplace, and beside him his betrothed, the lady with the sweet worn face and weary eyes. Whilst I had been groping my way by dark passages he had left his post of

duty to snatch a few moments of her society. Surely, deceived as I had been, I had the right to play eavesdropper. Drawing back behind a screen I watched and listened.

"You would always be true to me, Mabel?"

I hardly recognized the hollow voice as that of my friend; his tone was usually silvern, smooth, musical to a degree; this was the voice of a man whose soul reproached him, whose life was a lie, yet what meant its pathos? Had he pursued revenge only to rouse the old love to be in its turn *his* pursuer?

"You do not doubt me, dear? Years ago when I was quite a child I was false to one who cared for me; but I was so young, so dependent upon those who influenced and persuaded me. I have told you the tale—how he was only a tutor, a poor, low-born man, so rough, so proud, that I half feared him. Yet I have regretted my broken promise all my life. Arthur, you must not be angry with me if I say I think sometimes I love you for your likeness to him."

Her head was leant against his shoulder, and the firelight shone full on his dark face as he kissed her.

"If he were to come back—to plead with you for a renewal of your old love, to tell you how he has dreamt of you day and night, how he has kept tryst with you in his heart—what would you say to him, if he were poor as before?"

"But you—Arthur!"

"Forget me for a while; it would please me to know you were true to your old love—dead he is most likely. I do not fear the dead!"

"Then, poverty would make no difference; but, Arthur, why do you look at me so strangely?"

"If he had cheated you, lied to you—if he had lived his life seeking revenge upon you for your broken vow—would you forgive—could you love him still?"

"That would be too terrible. He would have no right to look for pardon. I was a thoughtlessly cruel girl, but I never wished him ill. Yet true love, even so far past, has a memory; because he was once dear to me I could forgive him—and then, who knows? How could a woman's heart fail to care for one whom she had utterly forgiven? It is the way of you men, Arthur, to grow cynical and rave at our fickleness, but all the while you are longing to believe in us again; and at last the day comes when

you learn that the safest, and perhaps the noblest, love *is* touched with pity."

He had thrown himself into a chair and had buried his tell-tale face between his hands.

"Oh, my God! Is it for this I schemed?" I heard him groan.

"You? . . . Reuben!"

"Mabel, I have brooded over the wrong you did me, until my anger had become a monomania! I have pictured you in my thoughts as a heartless, callous flirt! Yes, let me tell you," he exclaimed, as she turned from him sobbing bitterly, "I have forced myself to hate you; and then followed my plan. I, posing before the world as the intellectual, high-born man of fortune, would win your love only to cast it from me—to jilt you, as you once jilted me! The real Arthur Veriton may return at any moment, and I—I have lingered over my revenge until the crushed down love has risen from it. . . . You, whose pride I wished to pain, have taught me self-contempt. . . . You said just now that if Reuben Royd begged for your pardon you would grant it him! . . . Those words have taught me how I should have pardoned . . . how I have misjudged you! . . . Mabel! If true love even so far past has a memory—before I go . . . forgive me!"

\* \* \* \*

Three days later I met my friend Lester at the club.

"What is all this I hear about you, Veriton, and the other man? There is not any truth in it, is there?"

"As much truth as there usually is in gossip," I answered, with as careless an air as I could assume.

"By Jove! it's no use trying that on with me. People say that you sanctioned his goings on—that you let him take your name, and hoax society—and deceive Lady Mabel into an engagement!"

"The announcement in the *Trumpeter* has been contradicted, and I want you to seem to believe the tale, Lester,—it isn't quite right—but for the lady's sake, and a little for his, too, we are going to pretend it was. There was an old love affair between them, years before she married Beauregard, and they made it up again; but Royd was one to whom the world denied the title 'gentleman;' now that it has been trapped into receiving him,

it will not own itself duped. Theirs will be an indefinitely long engagement, lasting their lives long perhaps, but Lady Mabel's choice has been declared charming and distinguished by the most competent judges. Of course there is another side to the tale. I, in my turn, was attached to a dear little girl on the other side of the water—a poor, insignificant, ignorant dear little girl—and I wanted to win her before shocking her with an account of my wealth. Leaving Royd to play my part in England, I went back to Australia and—well—you'll hear of my wedding in a few weeks, as soon as her people bring her across. Romantic tale, isn't it?"

"You don't expect me to believe it?"

"No; but persuade others to do so."

"Will Lady Mabel forgive him?"

"She has, Lester; never was a man so changed! He has learned to doubt himself—to acknowledge vengeance is a weapon too mighty for the weak human hand to wield. I should not be surprised—women are such strange creatures—if some day she does not repay him his revenge by love and trust."

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## A Hunting Adventure

FOUNDED ON FACT.

"TUMBLE up, old chap, or we shall be late."

These words were uttered in rather a loud key by a tall man, dressed in a picturesque garb, consisting of high boots, wide flapping hat, loose shirt, with a gaudy-coloured sash tied round his waist, into which were stuck a couple of pistols and a wicked-looking knife.

He was standing outside a low tent which formed one of a group of two or three, dimly discerned through the darkness by the uncertain light of several horn lanterns, held by wild-looking Indian boys, who were standing round a group of wiry little Mexican horses, or sitting cross-legged placidly smoking.

This appeal produced no results; the tall man repeated it in rather a more impatient tone, and not in what might be considered the language generally used by the politest circles, but at any rate it achieved the desired effect. A voice from inside the tent, desiring his friend to desist from making such a confounded row, was followed by the appearance of a young man who had to stoop quite low to pass under the doorway, and when outside, stretched himself to his full height with a portentous yawn. He was of slighter build than the first speaker, whom we had better at once introduce by the name of Adolphus Mannering, a captain in Her Majesty's Royal —th, in which distinguished regiment our younger friend had just received a commission. Adolphus, or "Dolly," as of course he was called, had at once constituted himself "guide, philosopher, and friend" of young Edward Stanley, which accounts for our finding them together on the plains of Mexico at three o'clock in the morning. A first-rate sportsman, and accustomed to all sorts of adventure, it is not wonderful that "Dolly" Mannering had imbued young Stanley with an enthusiastic admiration for the chase, and he had found no difficulty in persuading him to join a party of Englishmen who meant to spend a couple of months on the plains or pampas of America, for the sake of hunting the wild deer of the country.



Now, with cheery stir and bustle, the party were assembling and mounting their little steeds, which, though hardly taller than English polo ponies, possessed the strength and endurance of full-sized thoroughbred horses. The party consisted of three other men, an old gentleman—Mr. Fraser—who had spent all his life in roving from country to country in search of adventure, and his son Ralph, who had been educated in England, and had just come out to join his father, a bright, high-spirited lad of sixteen, whose coolness in danger and cheerfulness of disposition had endeared him to all his companions, and made him the very apple of his father's eye. The last, but by no means least in his own estimation, was a tall and muscular half-breed, Pedro by name, who acted as guide to the party.

The object of such an early start was twofold. It was important to get the sport over and themselves safely back under cover, before the burning heat of the day had come on, which no one but the native Guachos, or Indians, could stand without danger of sunstroke. Also, they had to reach a certain gorge, about sixteen miles off, before the sun rose, in order to surround and cut off the herds of small deer who came down to drink at sunrise. Their senses of hearing and smell were so very acute, that frequently our hunters had been disappointed by arriving a few minutes after the dawn had appeared, and the wary little animals had become aware of their danger and fled out of sight before a trigger had been pulled.

To-day they were determined to be in time, so in about ten minutes they were all mounted, and, led by Pedro, were swinging away into the darkness at a smart canter. Edward Stanley had by this time become accustomed to the marvellous sagacity of his mustang, who, while the ground was perfectly invisible to European eyes, would steadily make his way, avoiding pitfalls or boulders, and occasionally scrambling like a cat down a little ravine and up on the other side, while all his rider had to do was to sit tight, often no easy task, and on an ordinary saddle almost impossible, but the high-peaked Mexican saddle made it much easier, and accidents were rarely heard of.

Young Ralph Fraser, riding alongside of him, beguiled the way with scraps of comic songs and a good deal of disjointed conversation, when they came upon a level place, but for the most part they galloped along in silence, except for a muttered,

"Hold up, you brute," or some exclamation to the same effect in Spanish, occasionally addressed to the mustangs. After an hour had passed in this manner, the first horseman, Pedro, pulled up, and all the others did the same. He dismounted, and enforcing silence by gestures, left the mustangs in charge of the Indians (who at once composed themselves in all sorts of attitudes and lit their pipes), and led the way on foot for about a mile further in silence. Their eyes had become accustomed to the darkness, and they could make out that the comparatively level plain they had been crossing had become more diversified in character. The rocky boulders had become higher and more frequent, and they had to pick their way with some care, for the ground seemed full of gaping fissures and cracks owing to the great heat, which in some cases were wide enough to require a good leap to cross. The hay-like, coarse grass, which had nearly covered the ground, now seemed dried up, and only appeared in patches, while the dead stillness of the night was broken by the sound of running water at a little distance.

Presently they came into the deeper blackness of a clump of trees at the edge of a ravine, and then Pedro stopped, looked round and signalled to them all to follow closely, while he produced a rope which he had wound round his waist, offering to attach it to young Ralph Fraser, who, having but just joined them, was not so experienced a cragsman as the rest. Ralph, however, made such energetic gestures of dissent that Pedro withdrew the offer, though shaking his head, and slowly they began their downward climb.

It was a perilous undertaking, for the slate-like rock which jutted out in the sides of the chasm was slippery and brittle, and sometimes a hasty exclamation and a heavy crash betrayed that a large piece had broken off under the tread of one of the party.

At last they reached the bottom in safety, and there, running noisily over the rocks that obstructed its channel, was the little stream whose sound had guided them so far.

Pedro arranged his party with promptitude, placing the guns at about a hundred yards apart along the sides of the stream, and cautioning them on no account to utter a word or make any movement which could betray their presence. He kept Ralph with him, and posted the other three separately. It was only just in time, for just as Pedro had given his last instruction in a

whisper, and crouched down with his companion behind a large fragment of rock, a certain luminous glow seemed to pervade the atmosphere, objects before dark and indistinct became clearer, and suddenly, with a rapidity unknown in European climates, the sun leapt up and irradiated the landscape.

Edward Stanley, lying at full length in the dried-up channel of a little tributary stream, entirely buried by the long grass and vegetation, ventured to raise his head and peep out. It was a lovely scene that met his gaze. The side of the gorge that they had descended with such pains in the dark towered above him on the left hand, its sides clothed with magnificent tropical verdure ; on his right rushed, sparkling and breaking into a thousand little cascades, the little river ; while scarcely a hundred yards away, on the other side, rose the other wall, stupendous in height, and to all appearance perfectly inaccessible, for the rocks seemed to hang over much more than on the side they had descended, and, when no earth could find a lodgment, no vegetation took root. It rose bare and desolate, but unspeakably grander than the more cultivated side, which was now lit up by the sunbeams, though they were unable to penetrate into the deep recesses and caves formed by the overhanging rocks.

Hush ! What was that ? Edward Stanley held his breath and listened. Was it only the rattling of a shower of stones ? Or was it, yes, it was, the quick patter of numberless little hoofs ! He cautiously raised himself to a kneeling position, cocked his rifle, and waited with bated breath. Nearer came the sound, till at last he saw, about two hundred yards away, a whole herd of small deer trotting down towards the water. He had time to admire the grace and agility of their movements as, springing lightly from rock to rock, ever and anon stopping to sniff the air with their sensitive nostrils, the unsuspecting creatures approached his ambush. No thought of pity crossed his mind now for the happiness he was about to destroy ; the sportsman's instinct, which some say is but a relic of the savage nature in us, flushed his cheek, strung his nerves, and made his hand steady. Now they have passed him, now they are crowding together at a place where the stream widens, when Pedro's shrill whistle is heard, and simultaneously a volley of shots is fired, scattering death and destruction among them. The sportsmen spring from their lairs and hurry towards the scene, while the affrighted deer

speed past them, springing lightly up the sides of the gorge, and leaving behind them no fewer than four lifeless bodies. Wild with excitement Ralph rushes to the spot, eagerly claiming one as his especial prey, which Pedro good-naturedly agrees to. Now the sport is over, and Pedro's whistle again summons the Guachos, who have been waiting for the signal. They come bounding down the sides of the precipice, like so many wild cats, to look after the game, and our party shoulder their guns and prepare for their upward climb.

Ralph thinks it very stupid to return so soon, though it is pointed out to him that they must be home before the full heat of the sun, that now it is nearly seven o'clock, and they have a good half-hour's climb up, and then a walk of about a mile before their sixteen miles' ride home. He is anxious to vary their route, and suggests that he and Edward Stanley should walk about a mile up the stream to where the gorge narrows, so as to almost meet at the top, and where he declares the climbing is much easier and shorter. Mr. Fraser looks to Pedro, who gives it as his opinion that the young men would be wiser to keep with the older party, but that, barring a little extra fatigue, there is no real danger. So off they go, Edward in front, taking the precaution to tie the rope round his waist, more to satisfy Mr. Fraser than for the thought of any real necessity. The two young fellows stride along cheerily together, while the older men begin their laborious ascent, intending to wait at the top for their young companions.

Presently Ralph stops, and looking up at a steep face of the rock declares his intention of mounting there, but, after one or two attempts, he gives it up, and they go on to where a sort of path has been made by the passage of a huge rock which had been loosened by some shock, and has torn its way down the face of the cliff, uprooting trees and dislodging boulders by its weight, till it has buried itself half way in the bed of the stream. The way seems practicable here, and Edward measures it with his eye, and thinks the rock certainly seems a good deal lower than where they had descended, while Ralph joyously shouts that they will be up first, and "take the shine out of the governor, by George!"

Now begins a scramble harder than either of them had contemplated, for the soft, slaty ground gives way with every foot-

step, and only by clinging to every root and branch that grew out of the side could they obtain any foothold, while the higher they got the more precipitous grew the ascent, till Edward sorely repented having consented to Ralph's boyish plan, and most sincerely wished himself and his young friend safely up. At last, getting a temporary foothold against a gnarled root of a tree, he turned to see how he was getting on. Ralph, with his face scarlet with exertion and his hands bleeding, was crawling on all fours round an overhanging piece of rock, and Edward held his breath till he saw him safely past, and with one foot in a cleft and both hands grasping at a friendly branch, stop for a minute's rest. Then Edward called down to him to keep steady, as he was going to throw him the rope, which, with much difficulty and some danger, he had succeeded in unwinding from his person. It was already fitted with loops, and it was an immense relief to Edward's mind when he saw the boy, too dazed and giddy to object, slip it over his head and under his arms. So far so good; but now, when he resumed his upward climb, the added weight, though Ralph struggled bravely to help himself on, was almost too much for his strength. Again and again he had to pause, and clutching desperately at anything firm, to stand with his back to the rock and his eyes shut, vainly endeavouring to still the beating of his heart, which seemed as though it must burst his breast, while the rock above him seemed to tower higher and blacker until he dared not look down. Certainly he cursed his own foolhardiness, and if it had not been for the sense of another life depending on his, he must have let go his hold. Higher and higher he mounted, his progress seeming to advance but by inches, while trees, rocks and sky seemed blended in a kaleidoscopic confusion.

But what does he hear, as for the hundredth time he stops to take breath? Is it a bird's cry? No! thank Heaven! it is the sound of a well-known voice, no other than that of his friend "Dolly," who, anxious at their prolonged absence, has strolled back to the edge of the chasm, and cautiously peering over, has discerned the two struggling figures. The sound gives Edward fresh courage, and shouting to Ralph, who, boy like, at once recovers his failing energies, with many a scramble and struggle attains a kind of platform about thirty feet from the top, and lies there panting and exhausted.

Suddenly a wild cry echoes up the cliff; it is Ralph's voice, but so changed, Edward can hardly recognize it.

"The rope is breaking! oh, Edward! save me!"

Horrorstruck, he looks over. It is too true! The rope, dragged and frayed against the sharp rock, has parted all its strands save one, and only that one stands between the boy and a fate that he shudders to contemplate, unless he can manage to hold on. He is lying face downwards, convulsively grasping a root of a magnificent geranium, whose scarlet blossoms profusely decorate the rugged cliff and hang in clusters over the edge. But as Edward looks he sees the root is gradually drawing out of the ground, and the boy is slipping by inches, while the rope is gradually untwisting and untwisting, and it seems that but a few moments must bring the end.

After one instant of dumb horror Edward grasps the situation, and shouts in a loud and cheerful voice to the terrified boy. "All right, old fellow, keep your heart up and *hold on*. Dolly is here with another rope!"

But even as he says these brave words he glances up at his friend, and his heart dies within him. There is a look of blank despair on Dolly's usually cheerful face that speaks for itself. No rope! Good heavens, what is to be done?

By this time the rest of the party have arrived, summoned by Mannering's shouts, and are looking over the edge with horror-struck faces. One or two of the Indians easily make their way to the ledge where Edward lies, but even they dare go no further. Beneath the ledge which Edward reached with a frantic spring on hearing his friend's voice, the rock shelves out for about five feet and then ceases. To this day Edward can never imagine how he got round it, but what was just possible coming up is perfectly impracticable going down; the loose stones had fallen after Edward had passed, and the little turf of vegetation that gave him an instant's foothold has gone with them, and from the edge of the rock there is a clear fall of 150 feet to the bottom.

Ralph has been climbing up a rather different route to avoid the rocks and shale that showered down behind his guide, and is lying in a sort of division between two rocks, which, if he could only keep his head, he might possibly get up. But the feeling of insecurity caused by the loss of his support added to the exhaustion of the climb has produced vertigo, and he seems to



have lost all sense of helping himself, save to cling with the tenacity of despair to his frail hold.

At length, as Edward gazes, the last strand of the rope gives, and the boy, with a wild shriek, disappears from sight.

In speechless horror Edward listens for the expected plunge of his body through the underwood, while imagination pictures the dull crash at the bottom ; but after an instant of dead silence he realizes the situation, and calls up to his friend above :

"He must have caught hold of something. Lower somebody down, for mercy's sake ! he may be saved yet."

"You *must* get up here first," was the reply ; "we have no other rope."

So Edward, with the effort of a despairing man, shaking off the sick giddiness that possesses him, scrambles hand over hand to the top. An excited group was there, but the hand to draw Edward up to the last step and to unloose the cord from his waist and eagerly to try its strength belongs to the most interested of all—Ralph's father, who, with a face white as death, appears perfectly self-possessed.

The rope is barely twenty feet long ; the only chance is for some one to go down to the ledge and be lowered from there. They all volunteer, but a young Indian, lithe and active as a cat, is chosen for the perilous task. Carefully he and Pedro climb down the rock, a far more difficult task than would be imagined, as the immense height turns even the strongest head giddy, and Mannering has enough to do to revive his friend, who is in a half-fainting condition, while Mr. Fraser hurries off a couple of the servants on mustangs to the distant tents for brandy, ropes and many necessities.

At last the two climbers have reached the rock, and Pedro is vainly endeavouring to find a sufficiently firm hold to attach the rope to, which is seemingly impossible, as after many vain attempts he calls up in a voice of despair that it cannot be done.

Edward, who by this time has recovered himself, shouts down to him to tie the rope round his own body and lie in the cleft as he had done.

At last, after what seem years to the agonized watchers above, this is done, and the young Indian, creeping down the rock backwards, is swung over the edge and disappears. A dangerous position truly. Nothing but a few feet of rope already frayed

and worn over his head, and one hundred and fifty feet of clear fall below him. The little stream looks like a silver thread in the distance. He hangs out in mid-air, being unable to reach the rock, even with his long pole, but even so how much preferable is his position to that of poor Ralph Fraser! Crouching head and knees together on a ledge so narrow as barely to allow him foothold, with the black rock overhanging him and quite invisible from above, he has given himself up, and only when he sees the wild figure of the Guacho some thirty feet above him does he venture to raise his head and gaze with the vacancy of despair. With a glad shout the Indian boy announces the fact, and is gently hauled up by willing hands to tell the glad news to the father.

But now what is to be done? There are no possible means of getting at the boy even if the rope were long enough, for any heavy body must necessarily hang at least ten feet away from him, and no human climber could possibly scramble down the bare face of the rock without swinging off into mid-air. There is nothing to be done until the return of the Indians but to shout cheerful messages down and promises of speedy relief. For a long time there is no reply. At length the heart-broken father and Mannering set off to run round the end of the gorge, which is nearly two miles off, in order to arrive opposite the place. When they reach the spot, and Mr. Fraser sees his precious only son in so fearful a position, seemingly hardly larger than some bird nestled up against the frowning cliff, with no visible means of support, his brave heart nearly fails him. Ralph can just see his father, and tries to raise his voice above a husky whisper, but the fearful sense of insecurity makes him feel that a word must topple him from his hold, and he sits silent, with all his energies, failing as they are, concentrated on holding on. His head is swimming; the little silver thread below him seems to rise and entangle itself round his head, with a rushing, roaring sound in his ears; the trees and ferns, gently waving, seem to become a horrible forest of green serpents and long arms and fingers extended to drag him down. He tries to think of a prayer, but nothing will come to his lips but some Latin lines he has learnt at school, and he repeats them over and over with a feverish persistency, knowing all the time there is no sense in them, but feeling that if he once ceases to repeat them he must loose his hold.

Hours pass in this way. The sun gets hotter and hotter. The

Indians return, bearing with them ropes and ladders, with blankets and strong brandy. Alas! they can be no good except for the miserable watchers on the top. Pedro again despatches them for a small tent, which he has put up to shelter them from the burning sun, but Mr. Fraser cannot rest in it. He wanders aimlessly up and down, suggesting all sorts of wild plans, which he knows are useless, but he cannot refrain from. Indians have been sent in all directions to try and reach the boy, but in vain.

Edward Stanley has spent some hours in vainly endeavouring to scale the cliff again where he had originally done it, but even when he has got up to where Ralph had first slipped from he cannot reach him. The reason of this is that the long trailing geranium root had not broken short off, but had been drawn out of the ground by his weight, and so had let him down slowly till with the strength of despair he had grasped at the willow-like tree growing out of the crevice, which had bent at first with him and then broken short off, leaving him to slip down it until he found this foothold. If the root had given way all at once he must have been dashed to atoms, but as it was, the tree having broken close to the ground, gave him some slight support, while it was quite impossible for any other person to repeat the performance. The tent has been pitched on the opposite side of the gorge, where Mr. Fraser can have the melancholy satisfaction of seeing his son, though he cannot reach him. At last the long weary day has passed, and night has come on. Through a strong telescope Ralph can be seen to be in a sort of stupor, his eyes closed, his head thrown back, mercifully unconscious of his position. The night passes by, oh, so slowly! Pedro and Captain Mannering have snatched a few hours' sleep, but Mr. Fraser paces up and down, leaning on Edward's arm, whom he seems to cling to in consequence of his youth and similarity of disposition with his dear son. At last the sun rises, and the eagerness with which the father gazes down the abyss is indeed pitiable. Yes, Ralph is still there, but not now so happily unconscious. His eyes are wide open and fixed, and he seems to fully realize the horror of his position. As soon as he catches sight of his father he waves his arm, and cries in a shrill weak voice for the first time, "Father, father! *when* are they coming to save me?" With a heart-broken groan the miserable father flings himself on the ground, and it falls to Edward's lot to answer this appeal.

With his voice broken and trembling with emotion he calls to the boy, and tells him that as yet they have not been able to reach him, and that the only chance is for some one to be lowered from above, and to be swung backwards and forwards till he reaches him, when, if he is very quick and steady, a good spring might enable the rescuer to catch him and bring him up in his arms. It is a desperate plan, but no one can suggest a better, so they all cross again and Edward has a strong double rope knotted under his arms, and taking his friend aside, gives him a few quiet messages in case he should not return, for he knows well it is but a forlorn hope, though the sight of the father's agony has prompted him to risk this one more chance. The rope is slowly paid out, and Edward slides down the face of the rock with a long staff in his hand to guide himself with. Lower, lower, till he is over the edge and hanging sheer out. He shouts a few directions and he is still lowered till he is parallel with poor Ralph, who looks at him with the wild, anxious eyes of a hunted creature, yet dare not leave his hold. Edward finds his staff is too short to reach the rock to give himself the desired momentum, so another is lowered to him with which he can just reach it. He gives a push and feels himself swing—to and fro—to and fro—each time getting a few inches nearer, while Ralph watches in agonized expectation. Ah! the swing is too short, he cannot get within six feet. He speaks kindly and encouragingly to the boy, and tells him to try and stand up, and when he is at his nearest to jump to him. It is a fearful risk, but the only chance. Ralph cautiously stretches one numbed limb and then the other, and still clutching his tree endeavours to straighten himself, but sinks down with a cry of pain. His ankle is dislocated. Just at this moment Edward hears a shout from above and he is hauled rapidly up without being able to stop them. He reaches the top and finds that he was only just in time, for the ropes had all but parted. The sharp rocks cut almost like knives. There is no need to picture the father's despair when he gives his sad intelligence. Now all hope is indeed over, and they can only return to the opposite side and wait—for what? However, another attempt is made to convey some food and wine in a little basket, but the boy has again sunk into a species of stupor and cannot be roused. The second day passes—the night comes on. Mr. Fraser, worn out with watching, is prevailed upon to take some food and sinks

into a heavy sleep. The third day arrives. The sun has scarcely lit up the horizon when the careworn watchers are roused by an ominous sound. Whish-whirr comes through the air, and hovering above their heads appear three huge vultures, whose brilliant keen eyes are anxiously scanning the sides of the gorge. With a shout of disgust Mannering seized his rifle, but the wary birds would not approach near enough for a shot, but hung aloft in the clear sky poised on their large wings, and evidently quite aware they had only to wait.

The sound of Mannering's shout awoke Mr. Fraser, who came to the door of the tent with a faint gleam of hope lighting his hollow eye, which soon, however, changed into his old look of blank despair when he saw the cause.

Suddenly he seemed to take a resolution, and stepped back into the tent, from whence he issued with his rifle loaded and cocked. He took three steps to the edge of the chasm, knelt for an instant with his eyes closed, then raised his rifle to his shoulder, aimed—not up—but *down*. . . . A sharp report echoed among the rocks. He had shot his son through the heart!

A. W. F.

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### After All!

I *think* that he loved me! at least, he said  
That the world could never be just the same,  
After the ashes lay cold and dead,  
The ashes of love that were once a flame.  
He said that always about my name,  
Was the sweet, sad sigh of an old regret!  
That life could never be quite the same,  
Or quite as glad as of old—but yet—  
I know that somewhere he lives—ah, me!  
Somewhere without me—beyond recall!  
The old, sweet bondage has left him free—

After all!

I *know* that I loved him! at least, I know,  
That when the ashes were grey and dead,  
I felt the flame of the long ago  
Brighten my life to a fiery red.  
He was not worthy! Ah, so they said!  
Not worthy even an hour's regret!  
So I told them the sweet, old love was dead—  
Buried like other old loves—but yet—  
Could the waters of Lethe flow—ah, me!  
And cover the past beyond recall,  
I know I could never again be free—

After all!

G. BUTT,  
Kasauli, Aug. 13th.



## A Buried Sin.

### CHAPTER V.

#### FROM POETRY TO PROSE.

FOR the next few days the young people had things much their own way ; Mrs. Thurlowe, having administered her rebuke, left it to ferment in their minds and produce the leaven of regret for past offences and respect for future proprieties. She subsided into her usual taciturnity and retirement ; and, provided that they appeared at table at the proper time, she took no further heed of them. Neither Dorothy nor Claire would wilfully have crossed their grandmother's desires nor acted against her wishes, but in some slight degree this could not be helped under the present circumstances.

Reginald Kent had not presented himself since that first visit when, finding Ruth absent, The Friars had lost its chief attraction for him ; however, it was quite natural that his brother or George D'Alton should call with inquiries, or drop in, as Mr. D'Alton at least had been accustomed to do, to afternoon tea ; they could not possibly "shut the door in his face," as Dolly tersely though not elegantly put it. Then if they met—by chance, of course—in their ramble by the shore, they naturally joined forces in search for sea anemones or geological specimens ; or if they encountered in their saunter through the woods, the sweet meadows, or the cornfields with their rich growth of waving grain, it was equally natural that they should walk and talk together ; and if they extended this delightful wandering till the twilight closed in, the girls discreetly dismissed their escort at the gate, so that dear Grannie should not be troubled with imaginary worries.

The fact is, the young folk had a great deal to say to one another ; they had seldom found an opportunity for such pleasant and undisturbed *tête-à-têtes*, the chaperone difficulty had always been a stumbling-block in their way ; but now they had plenty of time to settle the business of their hearts' devotion, and get their guns into position ready for action on Mrs. Blaine's

return from Knaresborough, when a double set of lovers threatened to claim her immediate attention.

"I don't think your mother will be much surprised," said Mr. D'Alton, addressing Dolly in a tone of happy consciousness; "she must have seen our attachment all along."

"Our attachment!" repeated Dolly with a little *moue*. "I don't think I've said anything about being attached at all, and certainly I should never under any circumstances hoist Cupid's banner, or go in for school-girl sentiment, or do anything so ridiculous as to attract anybody's attention to—the state of my digestion."

"Now, Dolly darling, don't be quarrelsome," he said. "You know that I mean—*my* devotion."

"Ah! that is quite a different matter," exclaimed Dorothy. "I don't think I've any particular objection to people suspecting *that*!"

"Perhaps Mrs. Blaine will not think me good enough for you," suggested Mr. D'Alton, seized with momentary depression; "and talking of that, I shouldn't blame her—nobody would be."

"Now that's modest," said Dorothy. "I am glad you see what a valuable person I am, and I do like humility in a man, one so seldom finds it; but perhaps when you know me better you'll not think quite so much of me."

"I never want to know you better," he began.

"What a rude thing to say," she exclaimed; "but really you don't know me at all—only the colour of my hair and eyes, the sound of my voice, and outside appearance generally—and appearances are often deceitful."

"I'm satisfied," he answered, looking on the girl's happy face with all the love-light shining in his eyes. "I am willing to take all your outward attractions, and give you credit for all invisible virtues; they'll come out some day as 'shining lights on life's highway.'"

"That all sounds very nice, but you only see the best of me now—wait till I turn round and you see the worst."

"There will never be a worst for me, Dolly darling; I shall never see anything but what is lovely and lovable about you; but as you are only human," he added apologetically, "I dare-say you may have some little faults hidden away somewhere, though I shall never find them—shouldn't see them if I did."

"No! well, that will be very right," she said gravely. "I've heard sensible people say that a husband should always have one eye shut and it doesn't matter if he can't see much with the other. You know, George, sometimes we quarrel now, and if we are always together I daresay we shall quarrel a great deal more."

"Well, then, we shall make it up a great deal more; so that won't matter," he answered stoutly. "If we can only get your mother's consent I shall not care how the world goes. Doesn't it seem strange, Dolly," and he laughed heartily as though it was the biggest joke out, "to think that you and I in three months' time may be walking about as Mr. and Mrs. D'Alton?"

"Now you put it that way, it seems too strange ever to be true!" exclaimed Dolly; "and I don't believe I should ever make up my mind to it—it seems such a serious thing to swear to love one person all one's life."

"I don't mind," replied Mr. D'Alton, "so that that 'one person' is you."

"But you know it won't always be *me*," observed Dolly. "We change every bit of us every seven years, so in seven years there won't be a bit of *me*, the original Dolly, left."

"Then," he answered merrily, "having once begun I shall not be able to stop. I shall go on loving that other person just the same."

"But in twenty years I may have been half a dozen different persons and you will have been a Mormon—a real live Mormon without knowing it."

So they strolled along the lovely green lanes on the bright summer day, the sunlight of their own souls mocking the sunlight without—as happy and as heedless as the birds that twittered and sang above their heads—interspersing their merry talk with as many affectionate demonstrations as it was prudent to exchange on the queen's highway, when prying eyes might peep from the leafy boughs, or familiar figures flit round unexpected corners, or even look down from a balloon, unlicensed witnesses to the overflow of their affections.

They were neither of them disposed to take a serious view of life, and in their future calculations took only *love* into account—ignoring the fact that love can't feed upon itself, but must be built up on butchers' and bakers' supplies and sundry other equally commonplace and equally necessary foundations. If this

foundation is rotten the whole love structure speedily falls into ruins, and "all the king's horses and all the king's men" could not build it up again; but they were both desperately in love; so far, love was the be-all and end-all of their existence; they were both young—she nineteen, he twenty-three—and of the grave responsibilities and sterner business of life they held not a thought between them—as yet. So far she had not a crumple among her rose leaves, and he—well, he had been occasionally afflicted with a *mauvais quart d'heure* when his creditors became troublesome, but he staved one off, gave a tit-bit to another, a promise to a third, and then went on, as is the way with some men, in a happy-go-lucky kind of way, looking neither backward nor forward.

He was a young soldier with small means and extravagant tastes. He was forced to associate, in daily life, with young fellows richer and more reckless than himself; hence came the temptation to run his life on the same line as theirs, and he naturally got crippled in the attempt. If a man will put his son in the army without the means of maintaining him there on a level with his companions, there is always some such unfortunate result. A young fellow, in the flush and pride of early manhood, will not grovel while his companions soar, nor drink water while they are jovial over their wine, nor refuse an oar because he can't pay his share of the boat. The position is a most spirit-crushing and trying one, which a high-spirited young fellow finds it hard to bear. Of course, every man ought to have the courage and be strong enough to stand his own ground and live on his own means—but in nine cases out of ten he doesn't. He tries to keep afloat with his companions, and generally goes under.

As for Mr. D'Alton, his difficulties had troubled him sometimes, but since he had known Dorothy he had thrown the thought of his liabilities aside like so much thistledown, trusting for his delivery to chance, to luck, to anything—but himself. "How to live on nothing a year paid quarterly" was the problem these foolish, happy young people expected Mrs. Blaine to solve satisfactorily on her return. Meanwhile they had outstripped their companions a long way; indeed they had never given them a thought—they were just thinking of returning homeward that they might be in time to pour out the grand-

mother's tea, when the station fly came lumbering along the road ; they stepped aside to escape being run over.

"Did you see who that was?" exclaimed Mr. D'Alton.

"No, I wasn't looking. Why?"

"I think, I am almost sure, it was Mrs. Blaine."

"And Ruth?"

"No, there was nobody with her—and she looked very sad and very thoughtful."

"Do you think she saw us?" exclaimed Dorothy eagerly.

"You—you had your arm round my waist, sir, and I told you not to do it." Mr. D'Alton did not seem at all repentant ; on the contrary, he seemed inclined to do it again, or worse.

"It does not matter," he said confidently ; "I shall see her to-morrow, then it will be all plain sailing." They hurried homeward, and on reaching The Friars, Dorothy, as usual, bade him good-bye at the gate ; Claire was still lingering by the way. Dorothy learned that her mother had returned, and hurried upstairs to give her a loving hug of welcome.

"Darling mother," she exclaimed, "I am so glad you have come home. We have been so dull without you." Mrs. Blaine returned her caress affectionately but with a certain degree of reserve.

"Well, my dear," she answered, "you seem to have done the best to enliven yourselves, judging from what I saw on the road." And there came a slight shade over her usually pleasant face. "I was a little surprised, Dolly, to find you wandering about in Mr. D'Alton's company, alone too, when I was away from home."

"We were not alone, mamma ; Claire and Mr. Algernon Kent were with us."

"But loitering half a mile behind you," replied Mrs. Blaine. "I should have stopped the fly and brought you home ; but I did not wish to put either you or Mr. D'Alton in a humiliating position. I'm ashamed of you, Dolly ; you would not have been tearing about the country in that fashion if I had been at home."

"We weren't tearing about the country, mamma," answered Dolly, resenting the expression ; "and if you had been at home we should not have had the same temptation." Then she added in her old saucy way, "Opportunity makes the thief, you know, and—" she threw all reserve to the winds—"he loves me, mamma ;

we love one another with all our hearts, and—he's coming to-morrow to tell you so."

"So far as that!" exclaimed Mrs. Blaine, elevating her brows in some surprise. "You have verified the old saying, 'Make hay while the sun shines.'"

"The hay has been making itself for a long time past—and you'll be very kind to him, mamma, won't you?" she added, hiding her rose-flushed face upon her mother's breast.

"Kind, my dear Dorothy, of course I shall be kind," answered her mother; "but if you could persuade him to leave this tale untold you would be kinder still, for it is impossible that anything serious can come of it."

"Why impossible, mamma? I thought you liked George D'Alton? He always seemed to be a special favourite of yours," said Dolly in surprised tones.

"So he is, my dear, and I do like him," replied Mrs. Blaine; "but to like a man as a pleasant chatty companion on the tennis lawn or at the tea-table, and to like him as your daughter's husband, are very different matters. No, Dolly, it is all quite out of the question—it is best that should be at once understood. For one thing he is too young——"

"He can feel quite as much as though he were a hundred," said Dolly, her spirits falling below zero; "and we think so much of one another—he has given me all his heart."

"It will be of no use to you, my dear child. He might as well give you his head!" said Mrs. Blaine. "Look at things reasonably, Dolly, and let us settle the matter once for all. In the first place, Mr. D'Alton has no position, and neither brains nor ability to make one—he is a nice gentlemanly, pleasant-mannered young fellow, I admit; but that is not enough——"

"But does love count for nothing, mamma?" ventured Dolly.

"Not much, my dear," replied her mother; "it is all very well in its way as a sort of side-dish, but it must be supplemented by other substantial good things. Now Mr. D'Alton has the tastes of a rich man with the resources of a very poor one. He has only his pay to live on—yet he smokes cigars at a shilling apiece, drinks champagne when he can only afford small beer, and tries to cover the skies with a twelve-foot canvas. No, Dolly, he is



recklessly extravagant—and—well, dear, run away; let him come to me to-morrow and I will talk to *him*; I daresay I shall bring him to see things in a reasonable light."

"But, mamma," began Dorothy.

"But, my dear child," replied her mother, interrupting her with a deprecating gesture, "there is so much serious business on hand I really ought not to be troubled with trifles. There, run away, that's a good girl. I must go and have a talk with granny at once; and, by-the-bye, when Claire comes in send her upstairs, and come yourself too—if you like; it will save the twice telling of one tale."

How close together lie the fountains of joy and sorrow!—the draught of the one is too soon embittered by the taste of the other. Dorothy remained standing exactly where her mother had left her—feeling very sorrowful and empty-hearted and dizzy, as though she had fallen from a height and was now grovelling on the ground. Her love—a girlish fancy her mother would have called it—for this gay young soldier had struck deep into her usually frivolous nature, and possessed it wholly. For weeks, nay months past, the thought of him had been with her from sunrise till sunset, and in all her girlish visions of coming years, in all her air-built castles on the distant plains, he was the central figure and occupied the foreground; all else was dwarfed beside him. For a few brief hours they had revelled in a dream of mutually confessed affection—but now after that one glimpse of paradise the gates seemed to have closed against her; and poverty, like a flaming sword, flashed forth the warning, "You must not enter here."

However a grain of hope forced its way to the front. She had great faith in her dear George's powers of eloquence, and trusted he would find something to say, some project to bring forward, that would place a new aspect on the face of affairs, which would induce her mother to change her opinion, and overthrow what at present seemed to be an insuperable objection to any engagement between them. Her mother's prosaic suggestions she regarded with lofty disdain. At the present moment common sense or prudence could not enter into Dorothy's calculations; she could only see things in a rosy love-light, and was supremely indifferent to butchers' or bakers' bills, and all such matter-of-fact considerations. Meanwhile Mrs.

Blaine went up to her mother's room ; there was much to tell, much to discuss.

"I thought it best to remain till after the funeral," said Mrs. Blaine, "to hear the will read and see how the land lay all round. Uncle Regy has left his affairs in perfect order ; things are exactly as we thought. Of course Harold takes the title and landed estates—except those parts which are not entailed ; but uncle has disposed of his personal effects and the property over which he holds control rather oddly, *I* think. Naturally there are legacies to all the old servants, and he has left that little freehold just outside the gates of Knaresborough—you remember, the pretty house that Mr. Levison has occupied for so many years?—well, he has left it to Mr. Levison and his heirs, male or female, for ever. He has left Dolly a thousand pounds, but he does not mention either *me* or *you* ! I suppose I resented dear Harold's wrongs too strongly—and of course he knows that you have never forgiven him. But the thing that astonishes me most of all," she continued in a voice of puzzled indignation, "he has left five thousand pounds to some unknown woman named Elizabeth Hollingsworth, or her heirs, and commands that no expense be spared in the endeavour to discover their whereabouts, he having lost sight of them for many years. Fancy bequeathing five thousand to a strange woman and only one thousand to Dolly, his own flesh and blood !" The elder lady let her hands fall into her lap.

"Elizabeth Hollingsworth," she repeated thoughtfully. "I have a dim sort of recollection that I have heard the name before."

"I believe that sly Levison could tell us something about it if he liked ; for if anybody was in Uncle Regy's confidence he was. I don't think Harold will care to have Mr. Levison settled down before his gates."

"No—he will naturally object. Mr. Levison is too closely connected with the unfortunate past for his presence to be anything but an embarrassment—indeed a living reproach ; although I believe the poor old man always deeply regrets the part his duty compelled him to take ; and *I* at least have never resented our sufferings upon *him* ! Still when a man has sinned and suffered as my poor boy has done, he might at least be allowed to forget—if he can."

"Poor Harold !" exclaimed Mrs. Blaine with moistening eyes.

"Mark my words, mother, the day will come when the truth will be known."

"It *is* known, to our sorrow," interrupted the elder lady.

"Yes, known according to *law*, not according to right," said Mrs. Blaine; "but it will be seen clearly one day that Harold has been in some way sacrificed. I should not wonder if all this time he has been paying the penalty for another's crime."

"If only it might be proved so," said the old lady mournfully, shaking her head, "then I should die in peace. But no, no, Anna, it is your dream—only your dream!"

"It was a piece of fiendish malice on Uncle Regy's part to carry his resentment beyond the grave," said Mrs. Blaine. "He could not prevent Harold having the property, which is his natural inheritance; but he has done his best to embitter the possession of it. I can quite understand his desire to show his regard for Mr. Levison, who he believes has served him faithfully for so many years (though I have my private opinion about it—but that's neither here nor there), but he might have shown it in some other way. As I said before, it was a piece of fiendish malice to place my brother's enemy at his own gates."

"Perhaps Mr. Levison will have the good feeling to let the property. I should not think it would be pleasant to his feelings to remain there; but then he is an old man now, and it has been his home for so many years, he seems to have become rooted to the soil; it would be hard for him to tear himself away. Besides, where could he go?"

"That's his business; but I should say anywhere away from Knaresborough," said Mrs. Blaine. "I never thought too well of Mr. Levison, and if he stays I shall think no better of him now."

"You were always prejudiced, Anna."

"You too, mother—but in the wrong direction; but that's an old question, and has been exhausted long ago."

"Well, Anna, I do hope you will disguise your feelings so far as to treat Mr. Levison with proper politeness. He is coming down in a few days to bring Ruth home, and I have written to invite him to stay on a little visit."

"Of course I should not allow my individual feelings to operate against my duty as hostess; only it is no harm for me to say in strict privacy that I wish our dear Ruth had some other father."

## CHAPTER VI.

## MRS. BLAINE'S VIEWS.

IN the dusk of the evening, the first of her arrival home, Mrs. Blaine discussed family matters in full conclave; the two girls for the first time being present as she spoke freely of the changed position of affairs—only keeping the one fact of the great family sorrow hidden, as she hoped to keep it for ever hidden, from Claire. Of course Claire knew well enough that her wandering father, so little known, so lovingly remembered, must be the heir to the title and estates of his uncle, the late Sir Reginald Thurlowe, but had never thought much of the matter, and since the crisis had come the fact had for the time escaped her memory. Her heart had indeed been too full of other things, and she had never thought at all of the change in her father's, and consequently in her own, position. Now that it was brought to her mind, associated with the idea of her father's return, her heart bounded and her face glowed with delight, not for the wealth or title's sake, but at the thought of seeing him again.

"Oh! auntie," she exclaimed, "it seems almost too good to be true—to think that my father, my dear father, is really coming home at last. When will he be here? I'm so impatient—can't we go and meet him at Liverpool? I have been longing for him so long that now I shall hardly be able to wait till he comes. When is the very earliest time that we can see him, auntie?"

"Well, I can't quite tell you that," replied Mrs. Blaine; "but Mr. Watson has written to him; and if he starts immediately he gets the letter he can't possibly be here for six weeks at the earliest. But think of the change in your position, Claire; you will be quite a little heiress now."

"A fig for position," exclaimed the girl; "I only want papa. If he were to return in rags and tatters, without a penny in the world, I should not care, so that only he comes back to me."

"I think you can scarcely remember him, Claire," said Dorothy; "you were such a little thing when he went away."

"I should know him—I'm sure I should know him among a thousand," replied Claire; "it all comes back to me now. I remember his face; for a long time it has been fading into an indistinct memory, but now I see him as plainly as when he

kissed me good-bye so long, long ago. I can almost hear his voice and remember what he said," she added, with corrugated brows and eyes half closed, as though she was searching back into some far-away memory. "Yes, we were in some dismal sort of place. I went down a long passage. He took me in his arms and said, 'Good-bye, darling; don't forget your poor father; never believe anything but that he loved you, and that the world is cruel and unjust. Child, will you remember? you are so young.' That is exactly what he said; he put my hair back, and looked into my eyes sorrowfully, oh, so sorrowfully. Why did he go, auntie, if he wanted to stay?"

"Want of money—poverty drives many a man to seek his fortune in distant countries, Claire, and your father was always very fond of travelling."

"Poverty would never drive me to leave those I love," said Claire; "but never mind all that now. I am sure papa did all for the best, and nothing matters now that he is coming home—but aunt, granny, you don't seem so glad as you ought to be. You are silent, and you look sad. You don't think—ah! surely nothing can prevent his coming now? If he went away to seek his fortune, now he has it waiting for him at home he will come back. It is not that you are afraid something will prevent his coming?"

"We *hope* nothing will prevent it, dear," replied Mrs. Blaine, "but nothing is *certain*. We cannot count upon anything until it has really happened, and I wouldn't have you too sanguine, Claire, because if anything should prevent or delay his coming, your disappointment will be doubly bitter. Hope for the best, dear child, but always prepare for the worst."

"I can't help expecting," replied Claire, "although I have only been hoping about five minutes, I feel as though I had been hoping and expecting all my life, and so I believe I have, only I didn't know it. I *won't* think of disappointment, aunt; it would be too dreadful. You don't know of any reason why he should not come?" and there was a suspicious note of interrogation in her voice.

"No, I know of none," replied Mrs. Blaine; "but then, Claire, there is the chapter of accidents to be considered."

"People often make themselves miserable thinking and preparing for things that never happen," rejoined Claire. "I don't

mean to do that! However much we prepare for disappointment we feel it quite as much when it comes as though we hadn't prepared for it at all."

"Mamma, I know now why you gave us *carte blanche* about our mourning," broke in Dorothy, who had listened attentively to all that was going on. "I suppose Uncle Harold will be a rich man, and—has Uncle Regy left us anything, mamma?"

"He has left *you* a legacy," replied her mother, "but nothing to any of the rest of us, and you will not come into possession of yours until you are twenty-one."

"Nothing to Claire?"

"Claire will not need anything. She will be well provided for, being Harold's only child."

"Ah!" said Claire, half to herself with a little fluttering sigh, "then perhaps he mayn't have to go to Austria after all."

"What is that about going to Austria?" asked Mrs. Blaine, whose sharp ears had caught the low-uttered words.

"He will be here presently, auntie, and explain matters for himself," replied Claire blushing, and her happy face suggested the story.

"*He!* Mercy upon me!" exclaimed Mrs. Blaine. "Am I to have *two* pairs of lovers on my hands to-day? I have been so happy, and hoped my two girls were content, for all these years. I had quite forgotten that such things as lovers existed; now it seems as though a moral earthquake was upheaving on all sides of us."

Mrs. Blaine was, however, very well prepared for the earthquake, and received the first shock the next morning early, for they had scarcely finished breakfast when Mr. D'Alton arrived. Dorothy saw him coming towards the house, and, as her mother rose to leave the room, said softly:

"Be kind to him, mamma, and be sure I see him before he leaves."

"Of course, Dolly, you don't suppose I am going to act the tyrant," replied Mrs. Blaine, "though I am sure Mr. D'Alton will recognize and be amenable to common sense, when it is once placed before him."

"You'll have to turn on strong side-lights if you mean him to see it in your fashion," replied Dolly. For a second she laid a detaining hand upon her mother's arm, adding, "You can talk



over things as sensibly as you like, mamma, but don't decide—nothing can be decided without *me*, for after all is said and done it is *my funeral*, you know."

"For goodness' sake, Dolly, don't use that vulgar American slang," said Mrs. Blaine impatiently. There was something belligerent in Dorothy's tone that did not please her. She was not so submissive as she had seemed the night before; in fact, she had lain awake tossing on her bed, and, as Mrs. Blaine would say, looking things plainly in the face, and had come to a decision that what would be most agreeable to herself would by all means, and in all ways, be the most desirable course for everybody—if they could only be got to see it. As the door closed on Mrs. Blaine the two girls plunged into a discussion on their mutual affairs and the probabilities as to their coming to a satisfactory arrangement.

"If anything happens to part me from George," exclaimed Dorothy impulsively, "I shall never be happy again—never. I see by your looks you don't believe me, Claire; you think because I'm naturally gay and light-hearted that I have no feeling."

"On the contrary, Dolly, I think you have a great deal of feeling, too much indeed, only it doesn't last—it blazes, flickers, and goes out. Why, how many fancies have you had during the last year?"

"Fancies. Oh! I don't take any account of fancies, but this is a really serious affair," replied Dolly. "I own I have *frivolled* a great deal, but it is like the moth and the candle: we who flutter around get more seriously burnt at last."

"Well, cheer up—don't be down-hearted," said Claire; "the course of true love never does run smooth, they say, and I do hope things will turn out all right for you at last."

"*Your* course promises to run smooth enough—everything looks bright ahead for you—every wish you have seems likely to be gratified. There's Uncle Harold at last coming home; there's wealth, position, love, everything for *you*—not but what I'm glad, very glad for your sake, Claire, only I feel like being left out in the cold—as though we were coming to cross roads where you and I must part company—*you* to be happy and I to be miserable."

"Don't talk nonsense," replied Claire; "we have been like sisters all our lives, and whatever happens we shall be like sisters

still. If things fall out well for me, they will be well for you too—and as for being miserable, why, you were not miserable yesterday, and why should you be miserable to-morrow?"

"Because yesterday I didn't know; to-day I do," answered Dolly with a little sigh. "I hoped mamma would be glad because I was glad; and now she is going on about *money*, as if *£ s. d.* were the only letters in the alphabet! Hark! that was the library door shutting, and mamma's coming this way. Oh! Claire, feel my hand, how it trembles!"

"Come into the library for a moment, will you, Dolly?" exclaimed Mrs. Blaine, glancing into the room quite cheerfully; and Dolly followed her into the library, where Mr. D'Alton stood staring out at the window in evidently not too jubilant a frame of mind.

"We have been having quite a nice pleasant talk," said Mrs. Blaine, smiling from one to the other; "and Mr. D'Alton has the good sense to see things in a reasonable light, and agrees with me that under existing circumstances any engagement between you is not to be thought of. It is simply impossible."

Dolly said nothing, but looked reproachfully in her lover's face. He looked uneasily from mother to daughter, evidently shivering under the maternal gaze, but he answered firmly:

"I don't exactly agree to that, Mrs. Blaine," and passing quickly to Dolly's side he put his arm round her and drew her to him in spite of that stony glare of disapproving eyes. "It is just this, Dolly darling: your mother has been pounding me with the money question till my brain seems beaten to a pulp. She says, and I dare say it is true, that we can't live without money."

"But some people live on very little," said Dolly shyly.

"Mr. D'Alton admits that he has nothing but his pay," rejoined Mrs. Blaine, coming down with sledge-hammer straightness to the point; "he admits that he can't live on that by himself, and what is not enough for one, by no arithmetic calculation can be stretched into enough for two."

"What a horrid nuisance money is!" exclaimed Dorothy ruefully.

"The want of it is a greater," rejoined Mrs. Blaine; "you are both inclined to take a too sentimental view of matters; I have an older head upon my shoulders, and have got to think for you both. I am sorry I cannot pose myself in a more amiable light,

but I must repeat, Mr. D'Alton, that I think it is a pity you did not take a little more time for reflection before you came forward with this proposal—or indeed before you sought my daughter at all."

"There was no seeking about it, mamma," replied Dolly; we came together quite naturally—because we couldn't help it."

"And when a fellow feels as bad about a thing as I do, he doesn't think of going into cold-blooded calculations about money matters," rejoined Mr. D'Alton in a rather injured tone.

"Yet somebody must go into those 'cold-blooded calculations,'" said Mrs. Blaine in an aggravatingly cheerful and reasonable way. "But I thought we had agreed about the inexpediency, indeed impossibility, of things going any further? It is better to cut the thread at once, than get it knotted into an inextricable tangle. Believe me," she added, laying her hand kindly on his arm, for the blank faces of the young people touched her; she had not forgotten one such equally bitter hour of her own youth, "I sympathize with you both; but it is not wise to deal gingerly with these matters—the firmer we grasp the nettle the less it hurts. This is a trying time for you, I know, but I am advising you for the best; you will see that some day, if you do not see it now. Love, however desperate it is, cannot live on air; it would become a ragged scarecrow in a month! Remember," she added more seriously, "I don't speak in ignorance. I've seen the romance of love in a cottage played out; and a melancholy spectacle it is. You see, Dolly dear, I only want things to end for the *present*. The day may come; something may happen to bring you together again."

"Yes, something may happen," returned Mr. D'Alton. "I may tumble upon some Tom Tidler's ground and pick up gold and silver." Then he added with sudden animation, "There is one thing which perhaps you don't know of, Mrs. Blaine; I've got a rich cousin, and I'm his next of kin: if he dies everything he has got will come to me."

"I know," said Mrs. Blaine; "but, you foolish fellow, your cousin is a bachelor in the prime of life, and a hundred things may happen to prevent your ever seeing a penny of his money. Besides, it is ill waiting for dead men's shoes, so put that idea out

of your mind at once. Now I really think we have said all that need be said ; words cannot alter circumstances, and I hope I have convinced you of the utter folly and imprudence of entering into any engagement at present—mind I only say at present," she added in a conciliatory tone ; "we don't know what may happen by and by."

"If we were once engaged," hazarded Mr. D'Alton, "we should not mind how long we waited—should we, Dolly?"

"I should mind very much," interrupted Mrs. Blaine quickly ; "that waiting is dreary work, and no man who really cared for a girl would wish her to spend the best years of her life waiting for a time that perhaps never comes." She looked at him severely. He turned his head guiltily away, and searched in Dolly's face for sympathy.

"At least, Mrs. Blaine," he said, "you will not be so unkind as to part us altogether. I join my regiment in a few days, and I suppose Dolly and I may meet as usual until then?"

"It would be wiser if you were to leave at once," said Mrs. Blaine ; "but let that be as you please. You can come and go like the rest of the world ; but there must be no solitary rambles, no moonlight meandering. On mere friendly terms we shall be happy to see you." She dropped the conversation, and said politely, as she made a move to show that the interview was ended, "Will you stay to luncheon?"

"Thanks, I think not, Mrs. Blaine," he replied, seeing he was not expected to accept ; "this sort of conversation rather takes away a fellow's appetite."

"Shall you be able to stay for the Kent House festivities?" said Mrs. Blaine with amiable complaisance ; "you have not forgotten that Mr. Kent gives all his people an entertainment on Saturday, and we have all promised to lend a helping hand in amusing them."

Mr. D'Alton was in no mood for drifting into common-place conversation. He took his leave. Dolly walked with him across the lawn, and they stood a long time at the gate. "Good-bye," or rather *au revoir*, took a great deal of saying.

When at last Dolly returned to the house, Mrs. Blaine said rather suspiciously :

"I hope you have not been making any foolish promises, Dolly?"

"There is no need for promises, mamma—whatever happens, we shall never either of us think of anybody else!"

"Humph!" said Mrs. Blaine with compassionate tolerance, "we shall see!"

## CHAPTER VII.

### MOTHER AND SONS.

EVERYTHING looked bright and promising for Claire and Algernon Kent. Mrs. Blaine had been graciously cordial during their brief interview, and was disposed to allow them to keep to their present tacit understanding (possibly she knew she could not prevent that), though of course it was not in her power to sanction any more decided arrangement—there must be no open engagement at present. Claire's father, who had been for many years absent from England, was expected shortly to return, and it would be for him to consider and decide upon this serious matter, in which his daughter's future happiness was involved. She made no allusion to the painful circumstances surrounding Harold Thurlowe's absence. She still hoped it would be possible to conceal them from Claire, especially if Algernon Kent carried out his present views of accepting the engineering business in Austria, which opened up a promising career to him, and would keep him and Claire abroad for some years, supposing that they gained Harold Thurlowe's consent and married this year. She did not think that Claire, with her romantic ideas of filial devotion, would marry without Harold's sanction. Claire had not the slightest doubt of her father's consent. What possible objection could the most exacting father have to Algernon Kent? He was handsome, energetic, honourable, and, with his intellect and industry, in the way to make for himself both fame and fortune. In her eyes he combined all the attractive and sterling qualities that go to make a man as perfect as man can be; and this pair of lovers were happy and contented, buoyant and rejoicing in the present, and looking forward confidently to the future. The one drawback to Claire's perfect bliss was the fact that Dolly's prospects were less bright than her own.

The two girls confided open-heartedly in one another; they

talked over their affairs with mutually sympathetic interest, and in spite of the uncertainty of her own position, Dolly took a vicarious pleasure in Claire's romance, which promised such a fair reality, though she could not help occasionally referring to her own cloudy prospects.

"It seems hard, doesn't it, Claire," she said, "that the want of a little money should have the power to make one miserable?"

"Not to make one miserable, Dolly dear," she answered, "only to prevent our being *quite* happy; and when we come to think of it the want of money may be made right any day, but there are some things the having or the wanting of which can never be made right. It seems to me that the mere fact of knowing that you love one another is happiness enough for the present. Think, Dolly dear, of the many things that *might* have been so much worse than the things that *are*."

"That's true enough, Claire," she answered, "but you know I never had your philosophical spirit; and after all, when we are suffering from things that *are* we don't trouble ourselves with what might have been. But you don't understand, dear, as indeed how should you, when you have everything so smooth and fair before you! You are a lucky girl, Claire; everything has come to you at once."

"Not quite come, but coming, I hope," replied Claire with a happy, hopeful smile. "Sometimes I feel so happy the house seems hardly large enough to hold me. I feel as though I could soar out of myself and fly! It can't last, this happiness of mine! I am afraid sometimes, afraid that something will happen to snatch the cup from my lips before I have time to drain it. Those lines keep throbbing in my head:

"We are not sure of sorrow, and joy was never sure;  
To-day may die to-morrow—time stoops to no man's lure."

And I dread lest my day should die before I have lived it through, before the happy to-morrow comes."

"If I were in your place," exclaimed Dolly, "I shouldn't let any such thoughts worry me. I'd drink up my cup to-day and not bother about to-morrow! If I had my George as you have your Algy, to-morrow would have no terrors for me."

Meanwhile the events that were, and those that were expected to come, created some interest and discussion at Kent House.



As Mrs. Kent rarely went out or appeared at any social gatherings—tea-parties or picnics knew her not—she depended on her sons for all information concerning her neighbours; and though she was not specially interested in anybody's affairs, a little gossip amused her, and they duly brought her the "latest intelligence" from The Friars.

It was only about a week since Reginald had expressed his intention of speaking to Ruth Levison, but, as she had been away with Mrs. Blaine, he had had no opportunity of doing so; therefore he had nothing on that subject to tell his mother; and, finding that he made no further allusion to it, she hoped the matter had fallen through. Though she said nothing, she thought a great deal about it; it was one of those things that lay nearest to her heart, but furthest from her lips.

Mrs. Kent was not a woman to sympathize with love or sentiment, or anything in the way of marrying or approaching the marrying stage—any allusion to such heart-stirring matters seemed to jar upon her feelings; therefore it was no wonder that at the present state of affairs her younger son did not take her in his confidence respecting Claire Thurlowe. He thought he would wait till all was settled and Sir Harold Thurlowe's consent obtained; it would then be quite time enough to broach a subject which he knew might be distasteful to her; but they talked freely and had plenty to say upon the unexpected death of Sir Reginald Thurlowe, and the change thereby effected in the fortunes of the Blaine family. Mrs. Kent was eager for every detail concerning the deceased baronet. The subject interested, nay, agitated her; she questioned them on the most trivial point, indeed made more curious inquiries than they were able to answer. The curiosity of one who was usually so indifferent to other people's affairs attracted the attention of her sons.

"Why, mother," exclaimed Reginald, in open-eyed wonder, "how interested you are about this old Sir Reginald Thurlowe! and yet we never even heard his name till a few days ago. As a rule you're not much interested in the people you do know, and not at all in the people you don't."

"Perhaps you knew something of him in some old dead-and-gone days, mother?" hazarded her younger son, who had a keener eye for observation than his matter-of-fact brother, who

never saw farther than the end of his own nose, and not always that. Algernon noticed that his mother seemed much disturbed, and his attention was more attracted by her manner than her words, especially when she answered brusquely:

"Yes, I knew something of him—a hundred years ago—but I did not know how closely he was connected with these Blaines until—lately."

"And you don't know how much *we* are interested in the Blaine family, does she, old boy?" exclaimed Reginald indiscreetly, slapping his brother on the back and winking violently. "When Claire's father comes home we'll let her into all our secrets."

"Who is Claire? and what has her father to do with the matter?" inquired Mrs. Kent with puckered brows.

"Ah! I forgot," answered Reginald, "you don't know, as I've always called the two girls 'Miss Dolly' and 'Miss Claire.' I really didn't know myself at first that they had different names till lately. The one is a niece, 'Claire Thurlowe,' the daughter of Harold Thurlowe, the new baronet."

"Aye, then, that's it!" exclaimed Mrs Kent, passing her hand across her forehead as though to clear the cobwebs from her brain. "Why didn't you let me know this before?"—sharply turning to her son Reginald.

"Why didn't I let you know what?" replied the bewildered Reginald. "What do you care about the Blaine family? except, indeed, that they seem to irritate your nerves somehow. There's nothing particular in the fact of one man dying and another stepping into his shoes; it is a commonplace occurrence enough; only interesting in this case because the Blaines happen to be our neighbours. Another reason why I never talk much of them to you is that the very name of Blaine seems to act upon your temper as a red rag acts upon a mad bull. Can't imagine why—they never did *you* any harm. I hope, though, we may all settle down on friendly terms when Sir Harold comes home, which I think will be soon."

"I don't believe he ever will come home," said Mrs Kent.

"He has been summoned to return," said Algernon. "I believe he has been travelling for a good many years, but he must come home now, for there are all the formalities of inheritance to be gone through, and all sorts of legal business to be looked after;

it is one thing to be the heir, another to take possession. However reluctant, he must come back now."

"Well, you will see!" said Mrs. Kent with tightened lips.

"You seem to be developing sphinx-like qualities, mother," laughed Algernon, "and are trying to puzzle our brains with prophetic nonsense. For my part, I am looking anxiously forward to making Sir Harold's acquaintance."

"Why?" The interrogation fell frostily from her lips.

"Because—well, it is rather premature—I did not mean to tell you till it was all settled." He smiled a bright confident smile as he added, "His daughter Claire and I are very much interested in one another—she is the dearest girl in the world, and I hope to induce him to accept *me* as a son, and you to welcome *her* as a daughter."

This startling piece of information fell like a bomb among the complicated thoughts that filled Mrs. Kent's mind. Seeing she remained grave and speechless, he added, "Won't you be willing? Surely you will be glad, mother? You look as grave as though you were ready to forbid the banns."

"I don't know whether I am glad or sorry," she answered slowly; "a little of one and a great deal of the other, I think. But it is all no use. Blind fate is stirring the air round us, and whatever I think, whatever I say, would be like flinging so much thistledown in the teeth of a strong north-easter. Things will go as *fate*, not as *you* or *I* may will them."

"Perhaps that's as well, mother," replied Algernon. "When we try to take things too much in our own hands we are apt to send them all awry, and land ourselves miles away from our wishing point, and catch the shadow instead of the substance, like the dog in the fable."

"I don't know anything about fate," exclaimed Reginald, more gruffly than was usual with him. He could scarcely tell why but he felt as though some under-current was setting against him. "I have paddled my own canoe so far and I mean to go on paddling. It is all very well to consider other people, and put yourself in the background, but there comes an end to that sort of thing." Mrs. Kent, as though she found some hidden meaning in his words, rose up and left the table. The least crumple in the family rose-leaf was visible to Algernon's observant eye, and it was always his endeavour to keep

things smooth and pleasant ; he laughed now as he answered his brother :

"When you take a back seat, Reggy, let us know. So far you have had a front place, and gone at a tolerably good pace too."

Reginald's stout, fast-going old cob was at the door—in a few minutes he would start for the factory, which was about four miles distant. He always rode there and back ; like many stout people he disliked the exercise of walking. Though he would play tennis or cricket half the day and never get tired, yet he wouldn't walk a mile if he could help it. Perhaps he might not have objected to a country stroll with Ruth Levison, but he had had no opportunity for that gentle and congenial exercise. As he rose to go, he inquired :

"I suppose everything is all right for Saturday, mother ? There will be about a hundred and twenty hands, taking them all together, and," he hesitated a second, "I think I told you 'The Friars' are going to send up a female contingent to help the entertainment, to play the piano, and all that sort of thing. I hope we shall score a great success *this time*." He emphasized the last words.

"I'll see that the tables are well spread, and that there's plenty on them," replied his mother ; "so far as that's concerned it will be all right. There shall be no complaints *this time*." She followed him out of the room, as she always did, to see him mount. His eye twinkled as he put his foot in the stirrup, and said, just loud enough for her to hear :

"And mother—you know I never object to little extravagancies, but I do hate your economies. Let there be plenty of everything, and everything of the best."

She nodded ; she knew what he meant. Although for some years she had lived in the midst of plenty she could not get away from the influence of the old days, when she had hard work to make both ends meet, and it was a consideration whether they should eat scraps of cold mutton or indulge in the luxury of a hash. Now her son had gone with the time, and as his wealth increased his ideas enlarged ; luxuries became necessities—the spirit of liberality pervaded all his doings. The servants' hall must be as well supplied as the family table, and a meal in waiting for every comer—no hungry soul was sent empty away. This, what she called "ruinous expenditure," ate like iron into Mrs.

Kent's thrifty soul. Reginald knew that if he left household affairs entirely in his mother's hands she would keep a tight hold, and might even go so far as to lock up larder and dairy, perhaps bung up the beer barrel ; so he took the general superintendence on himself, leaving all minor matters to her. She was mistress of the house under the master's eye. When she expostulated with him on the terrible waste in his daily doings, he had always the one answer ready :

"Paying good wages to good workers—helping our poorer neighbours, feeding the hungry, and clothing the naked—is not money wasted but well spent."

She had been always strongly opposed to the annual entertainment to the workpeople, but all the barriers she set up he knocked down like ninepins, and carried his point. He thought that the relations between master and men should not be confined to the mere business of work and wages, but embrace some knowledge of their social life, its trials, pains, and pleasures ; and he did his best to forward this object. On the last occasion of the gathering of his workpeople with their wives and children, the commissariat department had not been arranged to his satisfaction, whereby his wrath had been righteously roused ; he had *then* spoken sternly on the subject ; *now* he felt it would be enough if he gave a mild reminder of the old shortcomings.

Mrs. Kent stood somewhat in awe of this happy-go-lucky, good-natured son of hers ; kind, considerate, respectful to her he always was, patient and enduring too, but there were bounds she dared not overstep. There was a volcanic fire hidden away somewhere in his nature, and when stirred roughly, well—there was an explosion and it blazed. It is often so with good-natured, easy-going people ; once roused they blow the roof of the world off, while the purely passionate, hot-tempered ones boil over as quickly as a saucepan of milk, and froth and foam, letting off their waste steam ; but there is no damage done.

Mrs. Kent watched her eldest son riding away, whistling as he went. Algernon meanwhile had received the *Times*, just arrived from London, and settled himself to spell it through ; his mother sat opposite to him knitting the everlasting sock, which looked as though it never meant to be finished. Presently she let it fall in her lap—looked thoughtfully from the window,

as though following her thoughts on some far-away flight—then, as recalling herself suddenly, she said :

"Algernon, do you think these Blaines really mean to come on Saturday?"

"They have promised," he answered, "so why shouldn't they?"

"Perhaps this death may make some difference. I think it is indecent to go out pleasuring, and not two weeks since they went into mourning."

"One doesn't plunge into the deepest affliction department for one's great-uncle," he answered, "of whom perhaps we know as little as of our neighbouring crossing-sweeper; and as for pleasuring, I don't think that working hard to amuse such a gathering can be called 'pleasuring.'"

"Blood's thicker than water," said the old lady doggedly.

"Sometimes rather muddier, and would be all the better for a little clearing," rejoined Algernon. "I am glad I can stay over this festivity, for I hope Saturday will be a red letter day in our lives, mother dear," he added, laying his hand affectionately on her.

"Or it may be a black letter day—who can tell?" she answered, with a vexed sigh and frown.

"I'm sorry to see the mother seems to have some fancy against the Blaines," Algernon observed afterwards to his brother.

"It's the liver," said Reginald confidentially. "The old lady's out of sorts, and women are queer—apt to ride restive and jib at new notions. I think she don't cotton to the notion of daughters-in-law, but she'll come round all right, Algy, no fear. The old mother's a trump, and she won't go against *us*."

(*To be continued.*)